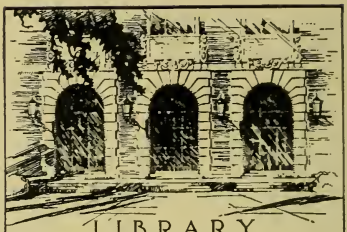
By Mr Ly Akela.



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PEREGRINE,

OR

THE FOOL OF FORTUNE.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

The Follies of Fashion, Lottery of Life, La Belle Sauvage, &c.

" Per tot discrimina rerum."

VIRGIL.

VOL. III.

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PEREGRINE.

CHAP. I.

TO any of our readers who are acquainted with the uſual feelings of a lover, it muſt be equally tedious and unneceſſary to enter into any minute relation of the ſtate of the mind of Peregrine; when every effort in ſearch of his loſt miſtreſs, produced no other fruit than that of wearineſs and diſappointment. In this, as in every other difficulty of his life, he experienced the advantage of confirmed

friendſhip. Haſtings was equally eager with himſelf in endeavouring to trace the route and preſent abode of Cecilia and her father; and when every thing proved ineffectual to this diſcovery, he was equally ready in adminiſtering to him the neceſſary conſolation. His moſt effectual argument to this purpoſe was, that it was impoſſible for any father, in a country like England, to conceal a daughter of mature age in a long confinement.

"This is not a country of *Lettres de Cachet*, of Nunneries, and *Maiſons Penitentieles*. In our Novels, indeed, you may read of violent abduction and arbitrary impriſonment; but ſuch incidents, thank Heaven, are only to be found in their pages."

Theſe arguments, and the conſequent hope, were effectual; Peregrine began at length to be perſuaded that his miſtreſs was only loſt to him for a time. In the meanwhile,

while, however, he reſolved to continue his ſearch.

Upon returning to the houſe of Sir Rupert from a viſit, he was met by the Knight himſelf. He was now ſo far advanced in his favour, that Sir Rupert had been diſpleaſed with his abſence. He received him therefore, upon his return, with much ſatisfaction, telling him that he was arrived in time to join a party of *cognoſcenti*, whom he expected to dinner.

" They are a ſociety," ſaid he, " to whom you ſhould rejoice to be introduced. Not one of them but is a public character; and ſo well known to all the world, and ſo peculiarly diſtinguiſhed not only from the reſt of mankind, but even from each other, that, were you to take down their converſation upon a card, and to paſte it up in any frequented coffee-houſe, there are few but would

be able to ſubſcribe to the card the names of the reſpective ſpeakers."

Peregrine accepted the invitation; and being ſhortly after ſummoned to table, was ſtruck with ſome aſtoniſhment at the curious aſſemblage. He even went ſo far as to imagine that, in the ſingular features of each, he could read ſomething of their characteriſtic accompliſhments; but being all at this time poſſeſſed of one common quality—that of a good appetite, and himſelf in common, he had the leſs inclination to indulge his remarks.

Upon the removal of the dinner, and the appearance of wine and the deſſert, their hearts began to open, and their ſingularities to become more prominent. A gentleman, who had taken his ſeat by Peregrine, and who ſcarcely indeed appeared of the ſame company, had entered into converſation with him,

and

and indulging in a vein of ſatire which did not ſit ill upon him, deſcribed the characters of the party.

" That gentleman whom you ſee there, at the head of the table, and at the right-hand of Sir Rupert, is a man of undoubted genius, and equal elegance of manners; his name is Sir J—— B——. But even his highly cultivated talents have not preſerved him from the laſh of ſatire: he is P———t of the R—— S——. It is in this character he has been chiefly attacked. He is ſaid to have transformed an aſſembly of philoſophers into a meeting of Dilettanti;—he is ſaid to have diverted their attention from Nature and her higheſt works, to monſters, fœtuſes, ſhells, foſſils, and the varieties of moſs. He is, however, a man of very ſuperior talents, and with an unuſual induſtry has ſailed round the world with Captain

Cooke, to advance his favourite ſcience.—He opens his houſe, upon certain evenings, to all the Literati of the age.

" The gentleman upon the other ſide of Sir Rupert, has all the ſingularities of Sir J——, without a grain either of his talents or accompliſhments: he is a Fellow of the S—— of A——. In every ſenſe of the word he is a true Antiquary. It is not many years ago that his houſe was on fire: two beautiful girls, his nieces, ruſhed from their apartments, and ſeeing the uncle eſcaping along the gallery, ſought relief from their terrors by throwing themſelves into his arms. The old gentleman at firſt received them with great affection; one of them had ſtrength enough to eſcape by herſelf, but the other had fainted in his arms. At this moment he perceived the fire to catch his ſtudy, in which were depoſited his antiquities; forgetful

of

of every thing, and ſuffering his burden to fall to the ground, he ruſhed forwards, and at the riſk of his own life and, unleſs a ſervant had in the ſame inſtant appeared, of the certain loſs of his niece, reſcued his darling rubbiſh from the approaching flames. He has ſince been known by the curious nick-name of Dare-devil D——; and, to my thoughts, he has well merited the epithet."

Peregrine was much entertained with this portraiture, and the more ſo as the perſons were all of them of the moſt eminent and conſpicuous of the day. It cannot have eſcaped the dulleſt obſervation, that no curioſity is greater than that which concerns our immediate cotemporaries. If any other proof were wanting, we ſhould only refer our readers to the catalogues of the books of the day, the moſt numerous articles of which will be found what are called Anecdotes,

Biographies, Memoirs, &c. The greater part of the writers of these articles are such indeed as are least suited to such relations; for few of them have even the slightest acquaintance with the characters whose not only public actions, but even private thoughts, they profess to detail. Such authors cannot but remind us of the saying of the great and witty Prince of Condé—"A plague these fools! they make us speak and act in every situation in the same manner in which themselves would do!"—Peregrine, from this cause, listened with pleasure to the remarks of his friend.

"Observe," said he, in continuation, "the gentleman who sits upon the same side of the table with ourselves, and is the fourth from us. The first lessons of our youth, and assuredly the most pleasing, are the delightful adventures of the heroes of the Iliad, the Odyssey,

Odyſſey, and the Æneid. Can any thing make more lively and more laſting impreſſions upon our memories, than thoſe ſcenes of Grecian and Roman beauty—thoſe images of ancient ſimplicity, and pictures of primeval nature?—All this that honeſt gentleman, Mr. B——, has diſcovered to be the fiction of a poet. He has eraſed Troy from the map of Greece, and gibbeted Homer for the moſt lying fabuliſt the world has produced.—The gentleman next to him is a man of undoubted wit, and of ſo much knowledge of the world, that his talents, a very unuſual thing to his fraternity, have made him an ample fortune. He was formerly in no other capacity than that of a knife-boy to a Norfolk Clergyman; his maſter was taken with his air of ſhrewdneſs, and educated him with his own children. Young P—— ſoon outſtripped his companions, and, by the liberality

of their father, was entered with them at Cambridge. His talents were soon rewarded with the chair of a Professor. His works, with the income of his Professorship, have given him treble the income of his former patron. His gratitude, however, is not unequal to the obligation: in a word, he is a man of no less virtue than science. May his future progress be equal to both!

"I must describe to you one more of our company, and I can select none more deserving this honour than the honest gentleman immediately opposite. His extravagance is greater than of any other member of this society. He is himself the protector of half the absurdities of the day; and should any such absurdity want encouragement, he is equally ready to afford his patronage. In a word, he is the sure resource to all the fools in the kingdom. He is almost the only

Noble-

Nobleman who is ridiculous for his liberality. If any one is in poſſeſſion of any new invention, or fancies himſelf in poſſeſſion of it, he makes it known to my Lord ———, who tranſmits him, as an anſwer to his application, a draft upon his banker."

This converſation of Peregrine and his ſatirical friend was here interrupted by a loud appeal to their opinion, to determine a debate upon the merits of an antiquity.—The ſubject of argument which had divided the whole ſociety into two parties, was a piece of rough ſtone, which one part of the company inſiſted to be an Egyptian ſphynx; and the other, with equal vehemence and equal appearance of probability, maintained to be of the Grecian School. Being put into the hands of Peregrine, he examined it with much attention; but having nothing of the antiquary about him, could diſcover

nothing in it but a reſemblance to one of thoſe rough cut heads which uſually terminate the ſmaller columns of pillars in a country church.

In the courſe of this debate a ſervant entered the room, and ſeeing the ſtone lying upon the table, took it up, and carried it out of the apartment. The parties were in this moment ſo taken up in the ſupport of their mutual opinions, that they had not perceived this removal, till one of them, deſirous of reinveſtigating it, happened to miſs it. The alarm being given that the ſtone could nowhere be found, the whole ſociety were in evident confuſion; and the value of the ſtone, to an antiquary at leaſt, being conſidered, even the known reſpectability of the gueſts could not preſerve them from the mutual ſuſpicion of each other.

The

The enquiry at length reaching the ears of the ſervant concerned, he confeſſed with ſome confuſion that himſelf had removed it. The fellow appeared loſt in aſtoniſhment when they all attacked him at once for what they were pleaſed to call his theft of the ſtone; ſome of them proceeding to menace him with the moſt rigorous proſecution, whilſt others demanded what he had done with it. The fellow was for ſome moments ſilent; but the enquiry of what he had done with it, being repeated, he begged them to wait his return, and left the room. In a few moments he returned, bringing in his hands a piece of ſtone.

"Here is the counterpart, gentlemen," ſaid he; "the ſcouring wench has taken the other, but will return with it in a moment."

In

In the ſame minute the woman appeared at the door, and produced the ſubject of their enquiry. Upon comparing the fragments, it was put beyond a doubt that the ſubject of their perplexity had been a piece of common free-ſtone, of a convex form, and uſed for the purpoſes of ſcouring.

The converſation of the company happening to take a turn upon the preſent ſtate of the drama, a gentleman, on the right-hand of Peregrine, harangued with equal fluency and knowledge upon this ſubject.

" The drama," ſaid he, " is not only inferior to what it was in the days of Congreve and Vanburgh, but has ſunk to a point from which it will with great difficulty again ariſe. The wit of dialogue, and humour of character, which ſhould conſtitute the life of Comedy, have given place to a buffoonery of ſpectacle and incident, which, in the claſſic

days of the ſtage, would not have been tolerated in the loweſt Farce. Did a Vanburgh, or Farquhar, or Wycherley deſire to excite a laugh, they ſought it from a ludicrous, but juſt portraiture of ſome abſurdity of general character. Do the bards of our own days, a R——, a M——, or a D——, ſeek the ſame effect, they affix to the leading characters of their pieces ſome cant-phraſes, and thus with greater facility, and indeed no expence at all either of wit or ſenſe, produce the deſired applauſe. And the plots are, if poſſible, ſtill beneath the dialogue: there is a vulgarity in the incidents which ſufficiently mark the rank of the writers. A broken tradeſman—the inſide of a gaol—a merry apothecary—and a jolly druggiſt, are the uſual ſubject matter of the moſt ſucceſsful of our preſent dramas."

Whilſt

Whilſt this gentleman was thus exhibiting his picture of our preſent ſtage, in colours perhaps too dark, but certainly with much juſtice, the friend of Peregrine touched the arm of the latter, and invited him to attend to the ſpeaker. Peregrine, from this cauſe, had liſtened in ſilence; and, when the remarks were concluded, demanded of his friend the name and character of the orator.

"His name is Mr. C——; and the mention of his name is of itſelf ſufficient for his character. He is one of the laſt ſchool of wits, and may be called the father of our preſent drama. He has been commended by Goldſmith with the uſual accuracy and elegance of that poet; for, with a kind of friendly perverſion of truth, he has exalted the greateſt defect of C—— into his moſt eminent merit. He thus, for inſtance, ſpeaks of him in his poem of Retaliation:—

'Here

' Here C—— lies, having acted his parts,
' The Terence of England, the mender of hearts;
' A flattering painter, who made it his care
' To draw men as they ought to be, not as they are;
' His gallants are all faultleſs, his women divine,
' And Comedy wonders at being ſo fine!'

The ſubject of their criticiſm now propoſed to depart to the Playhouſe, as a new Comedy, perhaps better than uſual, as he ſaid, was to be repreſented. The friend of Peregrine here informed him that the piece was the production of C—— himſelf, a ſecret he had learned from the actors.

Upon this propoſal the whole party adjourned to the Theatre, to the ſatisfaction of Peregrine, who was pleaſed with obſerving all turns of character; they divided only into two companies, and each of them took their ſeats in adjoining boxes.

Mr.

Mr. C——, with his more immediate friends, but none of whom appeared to be in the ſecret, were in the one next to Peregrine; the friend of Peregrine, the ſatirical gentleman, was ſtill by his ſide.

" I ſhould think," ſaid Peregrine, " that we cannot miſs entertainment for the evening."

" I think ſo too," replied his friend, " for ſhould we loſe it in the piece, we cannot miſs it in the author. It is one of the ſingularities of Mr. C—— that he cannot receive the public deciſion with the ſlighteſt degree of patience; he has nothing of humble ſubmiſſion which, in common with every one of the ſame fraternity, he profeſſes in his Prologue. Though one of the beſt Chriſtians of the day, he can ſcarcely ſuffer the audience to damn him, but what he is equally ready to damn the audience. In a word, in one of the beſt

Comedies

Comedies of one of the firſt wits of the day, I need not ſay I mean the C———c, he has been happily ridiculed for this folly, under the name of Sir Fretful P——y."

The repreſentation now commenced, and Peregrine beheld the juſtice of his friend's remarks. Nothing could exhibit greater marks of impatience than the countenance of Mr. C—— during the repreſentation of the ſlighteſt ſcene. The moſt inſignificant applauſe of the audience ſeemed to elevate him out of himſelf. Every thing proceeded well till towards the concluſion of the third act: ſome frivolity, both of the dialogue and of the plot, produced in this place loud marks of diſtaſte. The agony of Mr. C—— was now ſo great, and ſo viſibly impreſſed in the large drops of perſpiration which now burſt over the whole ſurface of his face, that any one muſt have pitied him in any other cauſe; but

but the anxiety being ſo extravagantly beyond the evil, it excited nothing but ridicule.

" Is it poſſible that a man of the ſound learning, and yet ſounder piety of C——," ſaid Peregrine, " can thus loſe himſelf in the hiſs of a mob? For what better is the part of the audience ſo loud in their diſapprobation?"

" You perceive that it is poſſible," replied his friend, " though no one could have given it credit, unleſs from the teſtimony of his own eyes. Mr. C——, however, is not the only one who has forgotten every thing in his character of an author."

The diſguſt of the audience, and the conſequent diſmiſſal of the Play, were now complete. Mr. C—— was unable to keep his ſeat any longer; and under pretence of indiſpoſition, and an emotion in every feature

of

of his face, which ſeemed to confirm the aſſertion, he left the Theatre.

The party immediately returned to the houſe of Sir Rupert, where, after having protracted the night in enjoyment of the table, they at length ſeparated, and each returned to his apartments. Such was this aſſembly of Dilettanti. Peregrine however did not regret his time as loſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

SOME time had now elapſed ſince the departure of Cecilia, and Peregrine began to conceive ſome apprehenſions that ſhe had left the kingdom. He was not without ſome ſuſpicion that her conſtancy had not ſtood the ſevere and double teſt of abſence and perſecution.

"She is a woman," he would ſay; "and though I believe her to be the firſt and beſt of her ſex, ſhe is ſtill a woman. What right, therefore, can I have to expect from her

her that firmneſs of reſolution, that ſteadineſs of purpoſe, ſo unuſual with her ſex?"

Theſe doubts indeed would ſometimes yield to the ſuggeſtions of hope. His mind, however, was alternately ſubject to the one or the other; a ſituation perhaps more painful than that of a certainty, however miſerable.

To relieve him from ſuch reflections, Haſtings endeavoured to withdraw him as it were from himſelf, and to this purpoſe perſuaded him to accompany him to every place of ſociety or public entertainment. Coming to his apartments in the morning, as he was ſeated at breakfaſt, he threw upon the table two tickets for a maſquerade of the enſuing evening, inviting Peregrine to take one, and join his company. He did not refuſe the offer.

At the proper time they departed to the Opera-houſe, the place of entertainment. As they entered the apartments, having at firſt enveloped themſelves in their dominos, Peregrine expreſſed his ſurpriſe at the multitude of viſitors, and the comparative paucity of actors.

"It is nothing more," replied Haſtings, "than what always occurs at an Engliſh maſquerade. Of all public entertainments, there are none to which the genius of our countrymen ſeems leſs adapted. A Dutch epigram, a French ſenate, and an Engliſh maſquerade appear to contain in them ſomething ſo contradictory to their names, that they cannot but excite ridicule even in their bare mention. A maſquerade upon the Continent is a meeting of perſons of wit; as all reſtraint is laid aſide in the ſame moment in which the maſk is aſſumed, it bears

ſome

ſome reſemblance to what the Romans called their Saturnalia. The vices, at leaſt the follies, of public characters, however eminent, are expoſed to the laſh of ridicule; this however is always within the bounds of *bienſeance*. No ſuch thing is to be found in an Engliſh maſquerade. It is a mere multitude, or mob of perſons of faſhion, who have no other purpoſe than that of killing an evening in the company of each other; and who, paying for their ticket, think that they have rather a right to expect, than an obligation to contribute to the amuſement of the evening. In a word, the ſimple definition of a maſquerade includes its moſt prominent character: a maſquerade is a ſpecies of public amuſement, where the ſpectators are at the ſame time both audience and actors—where nine-tenths of the company are ſtrangers to each other—and where the Engliſh reſerve

is so far maintained, that no one acknowledges the salute or address of those whom he does not know. With such subject matter, you may guess what is an English masquerade."

Peregrine had soon an opportunity of knowing that the description of his friend was just. To many addresses, no other answer was returned than the rude apology—"Sir, I beg your pardon, but I can't say I know you."

From some ladies, the freedom of whose manners, and the character of whose masks encouraged him to venture to address, he received no other answer than either the fixed stare of impudence, or the toss of insolence and disdain. A female, with the crook and other appendages of a shepherdess, replied to him with the pride and air of Semiramis; and the only civility he received during

during the evening was from an Empreſs, who invited him to adjourn to a tavern, and treat her to a bottle and ſupper.

Diſguſted at the frivolity and folly of the entertainment, where every thing was thus contradictory—where every rank voluntarily jumbled itſelf together, but maintaining its original pride, even in the midſt of its condeſcenſion, refuſed to mingle—where the nature of the thing demanded the moſt unreſtrained freedom, but where there was nothing but reſtraint—where every thing ſuppoſed equality, every one being under an engagement as it were to contribute to the entertainment of each other; but where every thing was diſtinction, pride, and reſerve—Peregrine and his friend retired.

As they were endeavouring to eſcape through the crowd of the door, another ſingularity of an Engliſh maſquerade, which

expoſes a Ducheſs to the huſtle of pick-pockets, and with ſcarcely a chance of eſcape without ſome inſolence, they found themſelves ſtopped by a tumult at the gates; and, upon enquiry, diſcovered it to be a diſpute between a gentleman and a hackney-coachman, upon the uſual ſubject of overcharge of fare.—With ſome difficulty they contrived to puſh forwards to the ſcene of debate, when, to the mutual aſtoniſhment of Peregrine and Haſtings, they recogniſed the perſon of their friend L—— in one of the diſputants.

The coachman, perceiving Haſtings and Peregrine, agreed to refer the affair to their deciſion, a reference to which L—— was compelled to conſent. Haſtings, upon hearing the ſubject, decided in the favour of the coachman againſt L——; and as L—— refuſed to abide by the determination, gueſſing the cauſe of his reluctance, he diſcharged

the

the demand, and invited L—— into his own coach.

L—— confeſſed that Haſtings had conjectured the ſubject of his embarraſſment, and accepted of their invitation to accompany them to a tavern to ſupper. The party ſoon arrived at the uſual place of reſort under the Piazzas.

Haſtings demanded of L—— in what manner he had become ſubject to the embarraſſment from which they had releaſed him. L—— confeſſed that he poſſeſſed no other ſum about him than what he had carried to the maſquerade, and which was ſufficient only to pay his ticket and fare; but that one of his pieces happening, contrary to his expectation, to be counterfeit, he had thus fallen ſhort of the demand of the coachman. As he knew that none are ſo inſolent as an Engliſh mob to perſons who maintain

the appearance of a gentleman without money, thinking perhaps that such an appearance is an unjust usurpation of superiority over themselves, he was unwilling to acknowledge in their presence his true situation, and therefore endeavoured to impute his reluctance to discharge the demand, to a conviction of its excess.

Peregrine and Hastings joined in their mirth upon this incident. As the more rapid circulation of the bottle augmented the spirits of the party, L—— became more talkative. Being asked by Hastings whether his prospects had brightened, he said that they had, and that an adventure some time since had opened to him a new vein of hope.

"I need not tell you," said he, "that I have been for some time in search of employment, and that the profits of my former occupation,

occupation, though at firſt ample, had been much diminiſhed by my long leiſure. I will not trouble you with the many ſucceſſes and many rebuffs it has been my fortune to meet with. The whole life of a man of letters—in other words, of a man who has no other means of ſupport than his wits, is a ſcene of viciſſitudes. Of theſe I have had my ſhare; but I have had hitherto little reaſon to accuſe Fortune.

" It is now ſome time ago, that I was riding one evening upon the road from London to St. Albans; it was about duſk. Two fellows happened to paſs me on horſeback; the appearance of each of whom, in every reſpect, was that of gentlemen of the road. Being in a contemplative mood, I ſuffered my horſe to take his own pace, and therefore was proceeding very ſlowly when they came up to me, one upon each ſide. They gave a

ſudden check to their horſes as they paſſed; but after looking at me a moment, again urged them to their former pace. I mention theſe more minute circumſtances, that you may underſtand the cauſes of my ſuſpicion. In a word, I could not heſitate to conclude from all that I ſaw, that the fellows were highwaymen in ſearch of a traveller ſuited to their purpoſes; and that I had eſcaped them by having no appearance of being richer than themſelves. I conjectured, therefore, that the next traveller might not be ſo fortunate, but reſolved if poſſible to prevent the robbery. I do not know whence it ſhould follow that courage and poverty ſhould ſo frequently go hand in hand; but I never felt leſs reluctance to riſk my life in the ſervice of another than at this moment. Perhaps, as the whole property I poſſeſſed in the world, was ſcarcely ſufficient to pay the next turnpike,

I was

I was the leſs unwilling to venture a life, the loſs of which would be of ſo little worth either to myſelf or others.

" The fellows therefore were no ſooner out of ſight, than I preſſed my horſe to his full ſpeed. I had proceeded ſcarcely a mile, when, by the light of the riſing moon, I diſtinguiſhed a carriage, which was in the ſame moment ſtopped by the highwaymen. In a few minutes I was immediately behind them; and, by the greateſt good fortune, had obtained this ſtation unperceived. I had no other weapon of offence about me than a common riding-whip; but being loaded with lead at the handle, it was of weight enough to give an effectual blow. By this means I had brought one of the ruffians to the ground; the other, perceiving the fall of his companion, preſented his piſtol at me; but one of the perſons in the coach ſtriking him upon

his levelled arm, the contents, upon its discharge, lodged in the neck of his own horse. The fellow himself was thus dismounted by the side of his companion, and an elderly gentleman, the same who had struck down the pistol, now getting out of the coach, placed himself by my side, and we united our efforts to secure the ruffians. To make short of my narrative, we at length succeeded; and by the assistance of the St. Albans stage, which came up to us, we delivered them over to the magistrates of the town.

" We had been so wholly occupied in our business, that the gentleman had not as yet returned his thanks for my assistance; the affair however being concluded, he requested my name and address.

' I am a man of business, Sir,' said he, with the air of a benevolent humourist, ' and I prefer to do every thing in order and method.

method. You have assisted me, and preserved my property—perhaps my life, at the evident risk of your own. Your courage is equal to your generosity: without any other weapon than the whip in your hand, you have presented yourself to the attack of two desperate and armed ruffians.—I have only to say, young man, that I owe you no inconsiderable obligation, and that I cannot consider a mere return of thanks as a sufficient satisfaction. No, no, Sir, this is not the way I pay my debts. No, Sir, I am an English merchant, and discharge my obligations according to another rate.'

Whilst L—— was relating this incident, and more particularly the characteristic address of the merchant, Peregrine listened with unusual attention; there was something in the manner of this address which recalled a character to his mind which we suppose

it unneceſſary to mention to the reader.—He entreated L—— to continue; but firſt demanded whether there was no one in the coach but the elderly gentleman.

"Yes," replied I.——, "there were ladies, but how many I know not; for the ſtage no ſooner came up with us, than the paſſengers having aſſiſted us to bind the highwaymen, but being too few to keep them in ſecurity, we united ourſelves to their party; and the gentleman, after having ſpoken a few words to the ladies, commanded his own coach to proceed, and to wait his arrival at the inn."

Peregrine thanked him for this ſatisfaction, but requeſted him to proceed.

"I have little further to add," reſumed L——. "Upon putting my name and addreſs into the hands of the old gentleman, he took a paper from his pocket-book, and putting

putting it into my hands, told me I ſhould find his upon the back of it; and adding that I ſhould hear farther from him, departed.—I returned to London the ſame night. You may conceive my ſurpriſe when, upon examination of this paper, in the expectation of finding the gentleman's addreſs, I found it to be a Bank of England note for a hundred pounds."

From every thing that Peregrine had heard, he had ſome ſuſpicion that the old gentleman was no other than the father of Cecilia, and that the ladies in the carriage were Mademoiſelle and his own miſtreſs. He could ſcarcely conceal his emotions of pleaſure upon this unexpected chance of being able to diſcover her abode. He demanded of L—— whether the addreſs was not given upon the back part of the note? L—— replied that the note was indorſed with a name,

name, which might perhaps be that of the gentleman; but that it mentioned no place of reſidence. Peregrine with eagerneſs demanded a ſight of it. L—— replied that he had it not about him, and did not remember the name; but that he would call upon Peregrine at his apartments on the following morning, and would bring it with him. The lateneſs of the hour compelled Peregrine to be ſatisfied with this promiſe; and after ſome further converſation, the friends ſeparated for the night.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

IT is unneceſſary to mention that Peregrine had retired to his bed, the evening of the maſquerade, more happy than he had ever been ſince the loſs of his miſtreſs. He could ſcarcely retain a doubt that the gentleman mentioned by L——, in his narrative of the robbery, was the father of Cecilia. He waited the return of day with all the impatience of an expecting lover. The name indorſed upon the note, might clear up every thing.

Towards

Towards morning he had fallen into a doze, from which he was awakened by the entrance of one of the ſervants of Sir Rupert, with a letter from the General Poſt. Upon opening it, the reader may conceive his rapturous tranſport when he recogniſed the characters of his miſtreſs.

Though Peregrine would not have ſacrificed a letter, much leſs a word, for all the mines of Peru—though he would not have exchanged a ſingle ſyllable of it for the moſt precious of the manuſcripts of Herculaneum, we believe our readers will be, for the moſt part, of a different ſentiment. For this purpoſe we ſhall only trouble ourſelves to tranſcribe an extract.

The commencement was in the uſual ſtyle of all ſuch letters.

It then proceeded to a minute relation of what our readers already know—the enmity

of

of Mademoiſelle to Peregrine and herſelf; and to the deſigns, very different from thoſe of enmity, which ſhe had ſo long purſued upon the father of Cecilia.

" I never underſtood," proceeded this young lady, " how far thoſe deſigns and that enmity had proceeded, until the morning of our departure. I was then within a cloſet of my own chamber: Mademoiſelle entered the latter in ſearch of me; but, as I had been juſtly diſpleaſed with her for her former conduct, I refuſed to anſwer her call. She thus fell into the error that I was abſent from the apartment. At this moment my father entered, and commenced a converſation with Mademoiſelle. To my equal aſtoniſhment and confuſion, and to your's perhaps equally

equally ſo when you ſhall hear it, Mademoiſelle was now—my mother! the wife of my *father!*—The ceremony had been privately performed the ſame morning, and as I diſcovered from their dialogue, was to remain concealed till our arrival in the country.—— What ſay you to this, my friend?—Is it not full of apprehenſion to us?"

Peregrine, by a ſtart from his bed, juſtified this remark of Cecilia; he was indeed ſurpriſed, for nothing was leſs in his expectation than this extraordinary union. He was no leſs alarmed at the obſtacles with which it menaced his love: he knew the determined enmity of Mademoiſelle to himſelf and Cecilia; another motive, that of rival intereſts, was now added to the former cauſes. The

fortune

fortune of Cecilia depended wholly upon her father; her five hundred pounds, the legacy of her aunt, did not deſerve the name of a fortune; ſhe had nothing therefore to depend upon but the liberality of her father. Mademoiſelle, now Madame, might indulge a reaſonable expectation of having children of her own; or had ſhe no ſuch expectation, ſhe was not of a temper to admit any one to ſhare the affections, and ſtill leſs the wealth of her huſband. What therefore had Peregrine to apprehend, but that Cecilia and himſelf, with regard to fortune at leaſt, and the concurrence of the father in their union, would fall the victims to the avarice and never-failing *politeſſe* of the ſubtile, deceitful Frenchwoman.

The letter again proceeded.

" What

" What followed had little leſs effect upon my ſpirits than the information I have above communicated. Mademoiſelle—I beg her pardon—Madame put into the hands of my father a letter, which, to my confuſion, I perceived through a chink of the door to be one I had received from yourſelf, and of which I know not in what manner ſhe had contrived to poſſeſs herſelf. As you know the characteriſtic humour, the grave but reſolute deciſion of my father, you will feel no ſurpriſe when I inform you that he, having read its contents, conveyed it without a word of obſervation into his pocket. This did not ſuit the purpoſe of Madame; ſhe cenſured both you and myſelf in the bittereſt terms; and her reproach was the more effectual,

effectual, as, with a moſt happy air of diſſimulation, ſhe aſſumed an appearance of complacency. She concluded by adviſing my father to hurry me immediately into the country, to preſerve me, as ſhe was pleaſed to call you, from the hands of a needy adventurer, who was only kept from ſeeking worſe reſources by the expectation of preying upon my fortune. She adviſed that the removal ſhould be no leſs ſecret than immediate; and that, to prevent the poſſibility of the place of my retreat being diſcovered, every ſervant in the family ſhould be diſmiſſed the moment of our departure, and that we ſhould proceed to the country with only hired poſtillions. I need not ſay that the whole of this advice was executed; and, as I have heard nothing of you, it has ſucceeded to the very extent of the wiſhes of the contrivers.

" I have

" I have nothing further to add, but that I am now under a confinement ſcarcely leſs rigorous than that of a criminal in a houſe of correction. My father, more from confidence in his wife, than any want of tenderneſs to me, entruſts every thing with regard to me to the management of our bittereſt enemy, Madame. Her diſſimulation is ſtill more odious than her perſecution; whilſt ſhe expoſes me to the ridicule even of the loweſt ſervants, by ſpreading a report amongſt them that the ſole purpoſe of my confinement is to prevent me from eloping with a ſharper. —You muſt pardon, me, my friend, for this mention of her vile terms.—She affects to lament over my failings with the tears and tenderneſs of a mother. It is thus no inconſiderable aggravation of my conduct in the opinion of my father, that it cauſes ſo much miſery to this good woman!—May Heaven

preſerve

preſerve you, my friend!—At preſent I can ſee nothing to hope; on the contrary, we have every thing to fear.

" Your's,

" CECILIA."

The letter concluded with theſe words.—Our readers will gueſs that Peregrine was not ſatisfied with one peruſal. To confeſs the truth, no Saint ever read his breviary with more ardent reſpect, than Peregrine theſe words of his Cecilia. It was not till a fourth peruſal, and the entrance of Haſtings, that he began to recover his former tranquillity. As he had no concealment from his friend, he put the letter into his hand. Haſtings, after a peruſal, demanded of Peregrine what he intended to do.

Peregrine now for the firſt moment commenced this deliberation; but had been engaged in the reflection but a few minutes, when Haſtings, throwing the letter on the table, told him he might ſpare himſelf the trouble; for he could do nothing, as the letter was without any ſuperſcription of the place from whence it had been ſent.

Such indeed had been the agitation of Cecilia as ſhe wrote it, that ſhe had forgotten this ſo neceſſary information. Peregrine examined the poſtmark—it was that of Norwich; but what could be collected from this? Nothing but that the letter had been put into that Poſt-office; but as Cecilia had ſaid in a poſtſcript, that her confinement had compelled her to entruſt the delivery of her letter at the poſt-office to a travelling pedlar, nothing could be concluded from this mark.

Peregrine

Peregrine was confounded; a ſudden recollection of L——'s indorſed note reſtored him to a momentary tranſport. But this was diſſipated by Haſtings, who having ſeen L—— in his way, had examined the indorſement, and found it to be that of a mercantile houſe. This information threw Peregrine into deſpair. Haſtings however ſuggeſted, that as Cecilia had written once, ſhe would find no difficulty in writing again; and though Peregrine had reaſon to apprehend that, having no anſwer to her firſt letter, her pride or her caution would not riſk a ſecond, he ſuffered this argument to take its deſired effect: ſo little does reaſon enter into the compoſition of the hopes, fears, or wiſhes of a lover.

As they ſat at the breakfaſt-table, Peregrine thought that he diſcovered an air of perplexity upon the features of his friend.

He queſtioned Haſtings upon the ſubject, who at length acknowledged both the effect and its cauſe.

It appeared from this confeſſion, that Haſtings had at length obtained a favourable propoſal from a Captain of an Eaſt India ſhip, to accompany him to the Eaſt Indies; but that he was withheld from accepting it, however promiſing, by a debt of conſiderable amount. In a moment of neceſſity he had applied to a tradeſman, with whom he had ſome intereſt; the tradeſman, with a rather unuſual generoſity, had advanced him the required ſum, and had taken no other ſecurity than a promiſe that he would not leave the kingdom.

Peregrine regretted that it was not in his power to releaſe Haſtings from his embarraſſment, by the immediate diſcharge of the debt; but demanded whether the lender would

would not consent to a transfer of the obligation. Upon his proposal to attempt this composition, Hastings added that he lived at the distance of a few streets, and invited Peregrine to accompany him to his house; an invitation with which Peregrine did not hesitate to comply.

The tradesman, as soon as he heard the purpose of their visit, consented to the proposal; and Peregrine gave a written engagement for the debt. He had another occasion for indulging his remarks upon a character of real worth, but something of singularity; he had no doubt, from the language of the tradesman, that he intended what he had pretended to lend, as a gift to Hastings; but the habits of business so far prevailed, that he observed, even in an act of liberality, all the forms of trade—a singularity not unusual.

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In their return home they were met by the Eaſt India Captain, the friend of Haſtings. He addreſſed him with ſome hurry, adding that he had been ſeeking him; for that the wind, the only circumſtance which had ſo long detained them in the river, had now changed to the deſired point, and that in leſs than an hour's time they muſt depart for Graveſend, and thence commence their voyage. Haſtings therefore was compelled to take an immediate leave of Peregrine; he promiſed that, from his firſt receipt of money, he would remit ſufficient to diſcharge the obligation in which Peregrine had engaged for him; and added that, from the character of the tradeſman, even though he did not intend to give him the money, he would be in no danger of being preſſed for payment till this time ſhould arrive. As the Captain continued to hurry Haſtings, and exhibit

exhibit other marks of impatience, the friends were at length conſtrained to take their final leave. It is unneceſſary to add that they both felt this ſeparation.

CHAP. IV.

IN his regret for the departure of Haſtings, Peregrine was hurrying towards his apartments with a pace uſual in a moment of anxiety, and when the mind is poſſeſſed with only one thought. He was interrupted in his reverie by ſome one taking him by the arm; and ſtarting from his abſtraction, he recogniſed L——. L—— told him that he was

ſeeking him; and, without further ceremony, hurried him into an adjoining coffee-houſe. They were no ſooner ſeated, than he put into his hand a letter, the contents of which were as follow:—

" SIR,

" You cannot forget the ſervice which you rendered to me ſome time ago, in defending me on the St. Albans road againſt the attack of two deſperate ruffians: or if you have forgotten it, Sir, I have not; for it is not my way, young man, to forget favours conferred. I gave you a ſlight acknowledgment at the moment, but I cannot conſider that as a ſufficient return. I demanded, you may remember, your addreſs; but what ſervice would this have

have been to me, had I intended to make no uſe of it?

" I mention this, young man, becauſe I love order; and as I could wiſh to know the cauſe of every thing, it is my maxim to give a cauſe for every thing I do myſelf.— I have only to add, that I diſcovered from your addreſs that you lived in the family of Mr. ———. That I might know in what manner I could beſt make you a return, I wrote to this gentleman, to enquire your preſent ſituation, &c. &c. I have learned from him what has given me much ſatisfaction.— I have now, therefore, to make you a propoſal. You muſt know, Sir, that I have two nephews, to whom I am guardian. It was always my intention to give them a private education in my own houſe; I employed a private tutor for this purpoſe, and for ſome time he gave me much ſatisfaction:—

ſome circumſtances occaſioned me to diſmiſs him, and to ſend my nephews to a public ſchool; but I do not, and never did approve a public education. My propoſal therefore is, that I ſhall again take my nephews home, and that you ſhall undertake the charge of them. If this propoſal pleaſes, you will immediately ſet off for Bury, where I ſhall be happy to receive you upon your own terms.

" Sir,

" Your humble and obedient ſervant,

" RALPH METHOD."

Peregrine no ſooner heard the name at the concluſion of the letter, than he gave ſuch manifeſt ſigns of intereſt in the epiſtle, that could not have eſcaped L—— at any other moment;

moment; but he was now ſo involved in the peruſal of the letter, and ſo wholly taken up with his good fortune, that he ſaw nothing but the epiſtle before him.

Peregrine juſtly conſidered that though the ſituation of L—— gave him an opportunity of aſſiſting him with his miſtreſs, yet it was not ſuch as to encourage him to any confidence; as L—— would be bound, by an obligation in the nature of "the point of honour," not to conſult the intereſts of his friend at the expence of thoſe of his patron. When L—— therefore told him that he ſhould depart on the ſucceeding day, in compliance with the invitation in the letter, he neither made an avowal of his ſentiments for Cecilia, nor, tempting as was the occaſion, would he ſuffer himſelf to charge him with any commiſſion whatever. He took

leave of L—— with the wiſhes of a good journey only.

It was late in the day before he returned to his apartments. A ſervant, the immediate attendant of Sir Rupert, informed him that the Knight had made many enquiries after him; and had commanded him to deliver to him, on his return, the meſſage that he would ſee him in his own apartment at ſix o'clock in the ſame afternoon; and, as the ſubject of the conference was an affair of importance, he requeſted that no pre-engagement whatever ſhould prevent it.

Peregrine was in ſome ſurpriſe what could be the cauſe of a meſſage ſo urgent. Indeed, for ſome days paſt there had appeared an evident change in the whole deportment of Sir Rupert. He had long manifeſted a partiality ſomewhat extraordinary towards

Peregrine, and, having nothing of reſerve in his character, had made him the depoſitary of his moſt important affairs. For ſome days paſt, however, there had been an earneſtneſs in the manner of Sir Rupert, which ſeemed to ſignify that his mind was occupied with ſomething of more than ordinary weight. He had perceived him ſeveral times retire to his cloſet; and Lady Rupee had not unfrequently expreſſed her curioſity and aſtoniſhment, by an enquiry both of Peregrine and Sir Rupert, what intereſt he could have in the peruſal of ſuch a multitude of papers. Putting theſe circumſtances together, Peregrine had no further doubt that the buſineſs of importance, mentioned in the meſſage, was ſomething that referred to this ſubject; and, as it had previouſly excited his curioſity, he waited with much impatience the appointed hour of the meeting.

He was interrupted in the midſt of theſe reflections by a ſummons to attend the drawing-room of Lady Rupee. The lady, upon his entrance, abruptly addreſſed him.

"I have ſent for you, Sir, that you may inform me what private buſineſs has ſo long wholly occupied the attention of Sir Rupert, that he can find no time even for a common interchange of civility. I neither expect, Sir, nor deſire any thing more than this common intercourſe; and, though the wife of Sir Rupert, I ſhall make no claims upon his ſociety or his affections;—I only expect to be treated like other ladies of faſhion. I had no leſs than four routs in my laſt week; but Sir Rupert thought proper to refuſe his attendance at all of them: he pretends to be occupied in buſineſs of importance. Sir, I know *you* to be his confidant, and the depoſitary of his ſecrets; and, as I do not chuſe to trouble

trouble him, I inſiſt upon receiving ſatisfaction from you!—Yes, Sir, I inſiſt upon knowing what is this buſineſs of importance, which makes Sir Rupert forget the common attentions of a huſband?"

Her Ladyſhip finiſhed, having accompanied her ſpeech with the uſual appendages of oratorical declamation. It was in vain that Peregrine proteſted his ignorance of the ſubject of the lady's enquiry: Lady Rupee was a woman, and one of the ſchool of M——u—; ſhe had too much confidence in her ſagacity and learning, to ſuffer herſelf to be perſuaded ſhe was deceived. It was indeed the foible of this lady, in common with her other ſingularities, that whatever ſhe choſe to deliver, whether as a ſentiment of taſte, or as an aſſertion of truth, ſhe expected to be received by her admiring dependants with

with as much submission as Aristotle himself could have exacted from the most enthusiastic of his disciples. In the fashionable *coteries* of the last twenty years of her life, she had been honoured with a seat at the right-hand of the Lady President herself; and even the demure affectation of a M——e, the pertness of a C———, and the awkward pedantry of a C——r, had been compelled to yield the place of honour to the more rapid loquacity, united with the power of patronage. This member of the society of *Femmés Scavantés* paid no other attention to the repeated assurances of Peregrine than, according to the usual course of her favourite *conversaziones*, to wait for his conclusion, that she might seize the moment to recommence her harangue. This she accordingly did, and with so much spirit and so much

much eloquence, that Peregrine, in the language of Cicero, more than once wiſhed "ſhe had been born dumb."

We ſhall not tire the patience of our readers by committing the whole of her tedious oration to paper; and indeed, as no Woodfall was preſent, it might have been an affair of no ſmall difficulty to catch words which, according to a ludicrous image, were ſwallowed almoſt in the ſame moment they were uttered.

In a word, the ſubſtance of this addreſs (for, in imitation of the orators of the *converſazioni*, the lady ſeemed to reſerve her ſubject for her concluſion) amounted to this, that ſhe ſuſpected that her huſband was peſtered by the application of poor relations, and that ſhe had been led to this conviction by one of Sir Rupert's letters, which ſhe ſtated to have accidentally fallen into her hands;

hands; though Peregrine ſuſpected that in this, as in many other accidents, Fortune had leſs ſhare than what had been imputed to her.—The lady, to eſtabliſh her aſſertion, read the letter aloud. The contents were as follow:—

To Sir Rupert Rupee.

" SIR,

" I have made the enquiries you commanded, by your letter of two months date from the preſent time, into the family of your late father, Jeremy Rupee, merchant of Cork, in the kingdom of Ireland.—You were pleaſed to inform me that you had a ſiſter, Miſs Frances Rupee; that you had reaſon to believe that ſhe was ſtill living, but that, from cauſes which you have not mentioned,

tioned, ſhe remained in obſcurity, in which it would be a matter of ſome difficulty to diſcover her.—I have diſcovered, Sir, that your ſiſter eloped from the houſe of your father in the year 17—, and the cauſe which common fame aſſigns to the elopement, is the cruelty of the treatment which ſhe experienced from her ſtepmother, the lady whom your father married ſome years after the death of your mother. I have furthermore traced her to Dublin, where ſhe aſſumed the habit of a milliner, and the name of Perkins, and ſupported herſelf by plain-work and millinery of all kinds. By the immediate and long continued purſuit of her father, urged on, according to common fame, by the ſtepmother, who, however ſhe might hate your ſiſter, and, as a rival to her own children, might even wiſh her to be utterly abandoned, did not deſire her cruelty ſhould be thus

publicly

publicly expoſed by the flight of your ſiſter—by this purſuit, I ſay, Sir, of your father, your ſiſter was compelled to leave Dublin, and deſert the ſhop which ſhe had taken as the only means of concealment and ſupport. She embarked for Scotland, on board a trader. All further ſearch has failed. I have not been able to trace her beyond this embarkation.

"I cannot omit the remark that your own ſearch, if made in perſon, might be more effectual; and I believe I can furniſh you with ſomething of a clue. To follow it up, will require more time and more attendance than my profeſſional duties will admit me to beſtow upon it. I muſt give it, therefore, as my opinion, that, upon the receipt of this letter, you ſhall depart, without loſs of time, for Ireland. I ſhall expect you, Sir, with impatience in Dublin; and, upon my part, nothing

nothing ſhall be wanting to enſure the ſucceſs of your ſearch.

" I am, Sir, your's, &c.

" T. SCENTWELL.

" *St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.*"

Peregrine had no time to reflect upon the extraordinary contents of this letter; for the interview of himſelf and the lady was here interrupted by the entrance of Sir Rupert himſelf. The lady, ſeeing her huſband, flung out of the apartment with an air of diſdain. Sir Rupert bowed to her as ſhe retired; and deſiring Peregrine to follow him to his cloſet, withdrew.

The lady, upon leaving the apartment, had thrown the letter upon the floor; Sir Rupert had taken it up, and ſeeing its contents,

tents, had conveyed it to his pocket. Upon entering the cloſet, and cloſing the door behind him, he gave it into the hands of Peregrine, deſiring him to peruſe it, whilſt he ſearched for other papers neceſſary to the ſubject of their conference. Peregrine did not confeſs that he was already acquainted with its contents; but Sir Rupert, finding his ſearch in vain, thus commenced—

"I have had occaſion, even in the courſe of the ſhort time you have lived with me, to obſerve that your talents are above your ſituation, and that no ſituation, Sir, would be above your merits."

Peregrine returned proper thanks for this compliment; and from the complacency of mind, and even elegance of manners of Sir Rupert in this, as well as on every other occaſion of addreſſing, was almoſt led into the concluſion that what is called claſſic learning, is

is of leſs uſe even to the accompliſhments of a finiſhed gentleman, that what has been generally imagined.

Sir Rupert, as we have before obſerved, had nothing of a ſcholaſtic education: he was as ignorant of Greek or Latin as the oſtentatious W——d himſelf; yet it would have been difficult to point out a man of a more pleaſing general addreſs than Sir Rupert.

It is unneceſſary to relate any further of the addreſs of Sir Rupert; it will be ſufficient to ſay that it conſiſted of expreſſions of confidence and unuſual kindneſs. He concluded thus—

"From that letter," ſaid he, "you will underſtand ſomething of the ſubject upon which I am about to ſpeak. To explain it more fully, it will be neceſſary that I ſhould enter into a kind of narrative of my life, at leaſt of my early years.—The relation will

not

not be long; and, perhaps, may contain something which may repay you for your attention."

Seeing Peregrine in the attitude of expectation, Sir Rupert thus commenced.

"As my present business only refers to my father and his immediate family, it is unnecessary to enter into a minute relation of any events which might have preceded his marriage with my mother.

"My father was a merchant of Cork, in the kingdom of Ireland; and having lived a life of the most active industry, had succeeded in amassing a property of a very considerable amount. At the age of forty, he was thus the most wealthy merchant in Ireland. To this period he had remained a bachelor; either because the hurry of business had left him no leisure to indulge any other thoughts, or that he conceived a wife might

might prove ſome impediment to his purſuit of wealth. At this age he looked around him; and, according to the uſual and indeed generous cuſtom of rich traders, ſelected a wife, whoſe only poſſeſſion was her perſonal beauty.

" For the firſt years of their union, they had nothing to wiſh as an addition to their happineſs. My mother preſented him with two children—my ſiſter and myſelf; and my father, according to his own words, had nothing to lament but that he had not before entered into a ſtate, the happineſs of which he now experienced. My mother was not without many even of what are called accompliſhments; but ſhe had what was of ſtill ſuperior worth, a pleaſing complacency of temper, and a goodneſs of heart which ſeemed formed for the diſcharge of connubial duties.

With

With ſuch qualities as theſe, the happineſs of my father is no reaſonable ſubject of ſurpriſe.

" Unfortunately, however, this happineſs was not of long duration; and the cauſe of its interruption is unhappily not ſo unfrequent in common life. A relation of my mother, a woman not without beauty, was an inmate in their family. My father was naturally of a turn ſomewhat libertine, and, unhappily, this woman was one of the moſt infamous of her ſex. In a word, but few months elapſed before an intrigue commenced between them. All happineſs was from this moment at an end. My mother could not long be deceived; as ſhe had that attachment to my father with which every virtuous woman regards her huſband, ſhe could not be long blind to his unuſual indifference. She was

for

for ſome time, however, more ignorant as to its full cauſe; but her eyes were at length opened.

" So infatuated were my father and this profligate woman in their guilty commerce, that though, from being in the ſame houſe, they ſaw each other almoſt every hour in the day, they could not content themſelves with theſe opportunities; and, to amuſe the intervals of their ſeparation, entered, though under the ſame roof, into an epiſtolary correſpondence. A young girl, in the capacity uſually called that of a lady's-maid, was the medium of this intercourſe, and the one to whom the letters of each were entruſted. This girl was of an artful and intriguing turn, and had much of that low cunning which is not unfrequently found in the attendants of her ſpecies. The miſtreſs of my father, in common with himſelf, had engaged her to their

ſervice by liberal bribes; and a propenſity to miſchief had led her to take a part againſt my mother. By the vigilance of my mother, however, the girl was detected; and ſhe thus became poſſeſſed of a letter from my father to his infamous paramour, which convinced her of what ſhe had long but ſuſpected.

" It is needleſs to my preſent purpoſe to enter into a minute relation of her emotions upon this diſcovery; ſuffice it to ſay, that they were thoſe which would be felt by every woman of virtue and delicacy in the ſame ſituation.

" As ſhe was deſirous of making ſtill further diſcoveries, the letter being ſuch as, however intelligible, might bear a double conſtruction, my mother reſolved upon a ſyſtem of conduct no leſs dangerous than ſingular. This was no other than to transfer the

the girl, the confidant of the guilty intrigue, into her own ſervice; a reſolution ſhe executed in the ſame moment, by a bribe more conſiderable than what ſhe juſtly ſuppoſed her to receive from the other party. The girl took the bribe, and promiſed that ſhe would deliver into her hands all the future correſpondence of the lovers.

" It has been juſtly remarked, that Virtue never excels in her uſe of the inſtruments of Cunning; and that, like the ſavages of America, when they attempt an imitation of European tactics, ſhe falls in her own ſnare; a truth which was fatally verified by the effect of this conduct of my mother. Her diſſimulation, however innocent in its end, fell only upon herſelf; and, after a ſhort interval, terminated in her death.

" The guilty lovers were but a ſhort time the victims of the treachery of the confidant;

they at length detected her in the actual practice of it. Any one less crafty than the infamous R——, would have dismissed a treacherous confidant in disgrace, with a bribe, perhaps, for future secrecy. R——, however, was too well versed in the politics of intrigue; instead of dismissing her, she resolved to find her more active employment. She justly considered that she might be repurchased with the same facility with which she had been purchased; and that, as my mother had seduced her from her former fidelity, so, by a more liberal bribe, she might be again won over to herself. Upon these grounds she resolved to build a design, as abandoned as it was successful.

"It will be necessary to explain it.—My mother whom, as I have told you, my father had selected for her personal charms, was still in the bloom of youth; her beauty therefore

therefore had ſuffered no diminution, and in a nation of the known gallantry of the Iriſh, her marriage had not terrified away all her former ſuitors. It is well known that, of all the nations of Europe, none ſo reſembled the French under their late Monarchy, as the Iriſh Nobleſſe; and in nothing was this reſemblance ſo perfect as in the gaiety, or, to ſpeak with more preciſion, the profligacy of their principles of gallantry. So far indeed were the men of the *ton* from ſeeking the favours of a fine woman through the uſual road of marriage, that they never conſidered a woman as a ſuitable object of their addreſſes, till her marriage had made her the property of another. She then became the common purſuit of all; and thoſe who had regarded her with indifference, perhaps with diſlike, in her ſingle ſtate, united in their

admiration of her as the wife of another.—Such, at that time, was the *bon ton* of the Irish.

" Amongst the lovers of my mother, was a Colonel Althorpe; a man of family, and possessed of an estate sufficient to supply the appendages of a life of fashion. He had been the assiduous attendant of my mother from the moment of her marriage; and, though a woman of the most strict virtue, and even bearing a personal dislike to Althorpe, she had been compelled to comply with the fashion of the day in treating him with some degree of patience. Althorpe had bribed to his service the same girl, who thus, at the same moment, was the confidant of three parties—my mother, my father and his paramour, and of himself. R—— had the good fortune to discover this secret; and upon this, and what

I have

I have before mentioned, contrived a plot for the ruin of my mother—a plot, alas! too ſucceſsful.

" Her firſt attempt was to excite the jealouſy of my father, and in this ſhe had little difficulty. Can one ſufficiently admire this ſtrange, though very uſual inconſiſtency? My father was a libertine no leſs in principle than in practice; yet no ſooner was he poſſeſſed with a ſuſpicion of the infidelity of his wife, than the rage of his jealouſy could only be equalled by that of an Othello. Such, however, is human nature.

" Having ſucceeded in this firſt part of her deſign, it was her next ſtep to procure a letter, forged in the hand-writing of my mother. This billet ſhe commanded the girl to put into the hands of my father. Its contents were as follow:—

To Colonel Althorpe.

'Is it poſſible, Colonel, that you have the confidence to indulge the expectations you have mentioned in your laſt billet?—Is it poſſible, Sir, that you ſhould forget that I have a huſband, to whom I am accountable no leſs for my honour than his own?—You ſay the preſent conduct of my huſband abſolves me from the obligation of the contract, for that every contract is mutual and conditional; and that I am only bound in fidelity to him, as long as he preſerves his faith towards me. You requeſt me to meet you in the ſummer-houſe, in the ſouth corner of the garden, and promiſe me a further explanation of your argument. I really think, Sir, it requires an explanation; and,

as

as I have ſome deſire to hear it, I will meet you at the appointed place and time.

' Your's, &c. &c. &c.'

" My father no ſooner read this billet than, without a moment's reflection upon the improbability that my mother, a woman of no leſs virtue than delicacy, ſhould have any part in a letter thus abandoned, and equally profligate in its tone as in its ſubject, he tore it into a thouſand pieces; and thus, to the no ſmall joy of the baſe R——, put it beyond his power to diſcover the cheat. He reſolved, however, not to prevent the interview, but to vindicate his injured honour upon the ſpot where he believed it about to be ſacrificed. You may conceive the impa-

tience with which he awaited the hour of the appointed meeting.

" In the meantime, the infamous R—— had neglected nothing neceſſary to the cataſtrophe ſhe expected. My mother ſtill continued to employ the above-mentioned girl as her confidant; and that the double treachery of this monſter might remain unſuſpected, the ſubtile R —— had furniſhed her, from time to time, with various letters, by the faithful delivery of which into the hands of my mother, ſhe eſcaped ſuſpicion, and encouraged her to ſtill further confidence.— Now that every thing was ready for the ruin of my mother, this faithleſs confidant, under a pretence of zeal in her ſervice, carried her the information that my father and the baſe R—— were to have a private interview in the ſummer-houſe, in the ſouth-end of the garden;

garden; adding the hour of the interview, the ſame as was mentioned in the forged billet.

" This information had the more effect upon my mother, as from the letters which the infamous R—— had purpoſely ſuffered to fall into her hands, through the medium of the double treachery of their common confidant, ſhe had been duped into the opinion that the purſuit of her huſband had met with a ſtrong oppoſition from the virtue of her friend. She reſolved, however, to be preſent at the appointed interview, and to tax both parties with a perfidy which, being thus detected, could be no longer denied. Thus far had the infamous plot ſucceeded.

" By the commands of the vile R——, a copy of the forged letter was carried by the girl to Althorpe. The vanity of the man rendered him an eaſy dupe; he readily believed that

his brilliant accompliſhments had ſoftened the virtue of my mother, and that his addreſſes were upon the point of being crowned with ſucceſs. The letter therefore was no ſooner delivered into his hands, than he accepted its invitation. Thus was conducted, and in a fair way of a moſt fatal concluſion, a plot no leſs ſingular for its intrigue than its wickedneſs. I am perſuaded that what have been called romantic plots, are not confined to the pages of Romance; and that many of the incidents of real life may rival even the moſt extravagant of the fictions of fancy. Indeed, human life itſelf is but too frequently a Romance; the contexture of the fable is ſuch, that no one, from the exordium, can conclude upon the cataſtrophe.

" To return, however, to my narrative. The awakened jealouſy of my father hurried him to the place of interview before the appointed

appointed time. There was, moreover, an appearance of impatience about my mother, which confirmed the ſuſpicion of my father. The Colonel, with equal impatience, haſtened to the place of appointment: he had no ſooner entered the door, than my father, burſting from his place of concealment, ſummoned him to defend his life. The Colonel was a man of courage; and though he had not expected this encounter, he did not refuſe the invitation. Thus in an inſtant were their ſwords preſented towards the breaſts of each other.

" In this moment appeared my mother: my father ſaw her as ſhe approached, and the ſight increaſed the rage of his jealouſy almoſt to the point of madneſs. The ſword of the Colonel was ſhivered into pieces by the unnatural ſtrength of his arm; and being

being thus disarmed, he received in his body the weapon of my father, even almost to its hilt. He fell, and was in an instant bathed in his blood. My father started back with a look of horror;—his fury was abated, but his jealousy and madness still remained.

"In this moment appeared the infamous R——. Before she had time to know the event of her plot, which was fatal, indeed far beyond her purpose, my father seized her by the arm, and hurried her from the garden, by a back-gate, into the adjacent fields.—His broken exclamations, and still more his sword yet reeking with blood, explained to her something of the catastrophe; and she justly considered it as a measure of prudence to make an immediate escape. My father suffered himself to be guided, and this woman was never wanting either in resolution,

or

or the diſcovery of expedients; they ſucceeded in gaining Dover, and within a few days had retired to Paris.

" To return to my mother, and to haſten to the concluſion of this moſt melancholy part of my narrative. Upon the ſpectacle of the engagement of my father and the Colonel, ſhe had fallen into a fit, from which ſhe had only been recovered to experience a dreadful ſucceſſion. The elopement of my father and his infamous paramour had their full effect; for, within leſs than a month, ſhe ſunk into the laſt reſource of the wretched, the laſt aſylum from the wicked—a grave!

" The wound of the Colonel was not mortal; and within ſix months of his departure from England, and five of the death of my mother, he returned to his native country. My mother, in a paper written ſome time before her death, had proteſted

her innocence, and implored the protection of my father for her two children, my ſiſter and myſelf. This paper, however, fell into the hands of the infamous R——, and was thus never ſeen by him to whom it was addreſſed. My father indeed felt ſome remorſe upon the death of my mother; but as he ſtill conſidered her as guilty, his pity ſoon ſubſided in his reſentment. But as he did not want common principle, though the ſtrength of his paſſions ſubjected him to frequent deviations, he ſtill retained a paternal affection towards my ſiſter and myſelf.

" In a few months the infamous R—— reaped the fruit of her intrigues, and became the wife of my father. In a ſhort period ſhe appeared to be pregnant. From this moment commenced a new ſeries of intrigues, the aim of which was to wean the affections of my father from my ſiſter and myſelf. She

ſo

ſo far ſucceeded that, though ſcarcely above the age of fifteen, I left my father's houſe, and, after ſome delay and ſome difficulties, obtained admiſſion into a ſhip of the Eaſt India Company. My ſiſter was compelled to undergo the perſecution of her ſtepmother for a longer period; to her, however, it had at length become ſo intolerable, that ſhe followed my example, and left the protection, if ſuch indeed it could be called, of her paternal roof. Such was the unrelenting perſecution of our ſtepmother.

" I am now haſtening to the ſubject of my preſent embarraſſment. I have told you that, upon my flight from the houſe of my father, I obtained admiſſion on board an Eaſt Indiaman. Suffice it to ſay, that my induſtry, perhaps ability in my new profeſſion, procured me the friendſhip and patronage of my Captain; and that having learned my

ſtory,

ſtory, and that my birth was ſomething more reſpectable than that of my companions, he advanced me to a higher capacity.

" It has often been obſerved, that Engliſh merchants and traders are the moſt liberal men in the world, and that of all Engliſh merchants none can rival in this reſpect the Eaſt India Company. In their ſervice, therefore, it was my good fortune to obtain a gradual riſe, and to realize, after ſome interval, my preſent property.

" The treatment I had received from my family, and the immenſity of the diſtance which ſeparated us, rendered them a ſubject of little intereſt to me; and being engaged in the purſuit of riches, a purſuit which of all others moſt effectually occupies the whole man, many years had paſſed away without my having received any information from my native place. Having ſucceeded at length

to

to the very extent of my wiſhes, and amaſſed a fortune equal to my moſt ſanguine hopes, and far ſuperior to my real wants, I began to feel that deſire to return to England, ſo predominant and irreſiſtible with the Eaſtern Nabobs.

" There is no term more in uſe amongſt us than the love of our country; but to underſtand, in other words to feel, this love in its true and natural extent, it is neceſſary that we ſhould have been for ſome length of time abſent from this object of our attachment. When we are ſinking to the earth beneath the direct beams of a tropical ſun—when, in our walks upon the banks of the Ganges, we reflect upon the diſtance which ſeparates us from all the dearer relations of life—when we ſee nothing around us but creatures who, though they may partake our human ſhape, have nothing of our common nature about them,

them, who avert from us as from the moſt pernicious contagion—it is then that we feel the true love of our country—the warm regret—the languiſhing remembrance of fields for ever verdant, and ſuns which ſhine but to refreſh and cheriſh. Our country is never ſo loved as when we think it loſt.

" Thus crowned with ſucceſs, I re-embarked for England. Upon my arrival in London, my firſt enquiry was into the preſent ſituation of my father and family.—My father and my ſtepmother were both dead; and for further information I was referred to his executor, the gentleman from whom I received the letter of which I requeſted your peruſal. The reſult of my enquiries was, that my ſtepmother had died during her pregnancy; and that in the remorſe of her death-bed, ſhe had confeſſed the innocence of my mother, and the whole artifice of the plot for her ruin.—

My

My father ſurvived her but two years; and to repair to the utmoſt of his power his injuſtice, bequeathed the whole of his property in truſt for my ſiſter and myſelf. My ſiſter, however, had diſappeared, to eſcape the perſecution of her ſtepmother; and though, in the interval between the death of this woman and himſelf, he had neglected no means of ſearch, every effort was fruitleſs.

" I have ſome reaſon, however, to believe that my ſiſter ſtill lives; and in this hope I ſhall neglect nothing to the ſucceſs of my ſearch. To this I conceive myſelf bound no leſs in juſtice than in natural affection; for the property of my father, to which my ſiſter is co-heireſs with myſelf, is little ſhort of a hundred thouſand pounds. I muſt add to this, that as I have no children, nor any expectation of any, and, with the exception of my ſiſter, am the only ſurviving member of my

my family, I have no other to look to for my own heir.

" The letter you have read, and this narrative of the incidents of my earlier life, muſt have explained to you the ſubject of my preſent embarraſſment.—I depart to Ireland to-morrow;—what I require of you, whom I ſhall leave behind, is this. My buſineſs in Ireland, as I have mentioned, is to follow a clue I have diſcovered for the further purſuit of my ſiſter; by means of this clue, perhaps I may trace her to London: as you will be upon the ſpot, I ſhall perhaps have recourſe to you, to unite your efforts to my own for the accompliſhment of this purpoſe. You ſhall receive information from me as to my progreſs; and I ſhall flatter myſelf that you will neglect nothing in which you may concur to a diſcovery ſo much in my wiſhes."

Sir

Sir Rupert here concluded; and, forcing into the hands of the reluctant Peregrine notes to the amount of five hundred pounds, left the apartment.

Peregrine could ſcarcely believe his own good fortune in being the poſſeſſor of a ſum like this; and when he retired to his bed, the greater part of the night was occupied in reflecting upon the uſes to which he ſhould apply his new opulence, ſo as to procure him ſomething of permanence. As his miſtreſs had her ſhare, and indeed the moſt conſiderable part, in theſe reflections, the reſu't was a reſolution to embark it in ſome trade or profeſſion, and thus procure a certain, though perhaps a moderate independence.

"And what further," ſaid he, "ſhall now prevent my union with my Cecilia?—What further ſhall delay me from flying to her reſcue, and delivering her from a perſecution, the

the malignant nature of which I muſt ſufficiently underſtand from the narrative of Sir Rupert? By means of this generoſity of Sir Rupert, employed in a proper way, I ſhall have no difficulty in procuring ſomething of an independent ſupport; and the ſmall pittance of my Cecilia's fortune, however inſufficient to any of the purpoſes of affluence, will make no inconſiderable addition to this.—Yes, my Cecilia, I will now be thy own. No longer ſhall you thus ſuffer under the unrelenting perſecution, the unmerited tyranny of your father and ſtepmother."

Sir Rupert and his Lady departed on the night of this day, upon their road to Holyhead; but as the lady had a rout the ſame evening, they did not commence their journey till ſome hours after Peregrine had retired to his bed.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

PEREGRINE aroſe in the morning full of the purpoſe which had occupied his thoughts during the night. To guard againſt any interruption to his thoughts, he ſecured the door of his apartment as he ſeated himſelf at his breakfaſt-table. He now gave a looſe to his mind, and was ſoon ſo involved in a thorough abſtraction, that, though the ſtreet had been on fire around him, he would have been inſenſible to his danger.

Of how many trades and profeſſions did he examine and compare the inconvenience and

advantage. For ſome, his capital was inſufficient; for others, he could find no ready vent for his ſtock. The profits of one were indeed lucrative, but the returns were ſlow; the payments in another were indeed immediate, but it could not be managed but by means of a ſuperior knowledge of its uſual courſe of buſineſs. In a word, he could fix upon nothing. In the wearineſs of indeciſion, he took up the newſpaper of the morning; his eye was immediately caught by an advertiſement to the following effect:—

"*Places under Government, &c.*

"Gentlemen in poſſeſſion of ſums of ready money, of one hundred, five hundred, or a thouſand pounds, are reſpectfully informed that, by applying to the houſe of

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——— and Co. they may be accommodated with places under Government, of an income producing upwards of fifty *per cent.* upon their purchaſe-money. A place of C——— in the T——— to be diſpoſed of for five hundred pounds, the annual income of which is upwards of three hundred pounds, and the neceſſary attendance ſcarcely more than three hours per day.—N. B. The utmoſt ſecrecy and honour are obſerved and expected.

"It is requeſted that none but the moſt reſpectable people, and ſuch as can be powerfully recommended, will make application."*

* Advertiſements of this kind may be met with in every paper; and theſe frauds, according to Colquhoun, in his excellent Syſtem of the Police, are no leſs ſucceſsful than daring.

The fluctuating mind of Peregrine was fixed by this advertiſement. And what indeed could better ſuit his ſituation than a place like the one mentioned?

"How happy," thought he, "can my Cecilia and myſelf live upon three hundred a-year thus earned! Attendance ſcarcely more than three hours a day! This is nothing. And a place like this to be purchaſed for five hundred pounds!"

In truth, this circumſtance at firſt excited the ſuſpicion of Peregrine; but it was quieted by the artifice of the clauſe, that none but the moſt reſpectable perſons would be deemed proper applicants. Thus reaſoned Peregrine, and thus have reaſoned many others.

Full of theſe reflections, Peregrine departed to the place of application. The appearance of the houſe, as having a tendency to confirm his error, gave him no ſmall

ſatisfaction:

ſatisfaction: it was large, and impreſſed, at leaſt externally, with all the features of ſubſtance. It was not the houſe of a ſharper; or at leaſt of ſuch ſharpers as Peregrine was accuſtomed to hear or read of. Indeed the knowledge of this young man, we mean the knowledge of the world—that knowledge without which a man muſt remain an infant, with regard to others, all the days of his life, was very ſhallow; and he had yet to learn that there were cheats whoſe external ſplendour, and even real opulence, might rival that of our moſt wealthy merchants;—he had yet to learn that impoſture, and more particularly its higher branches, had become a trade, and one of the moſt flouriſhing in our metropolis.

The counting-houſe, or office, was of the ſame appearance: it had an oſtentation of buſineſs. In one corner was a pile of papers,

rolls of parchments, &c. &c. which, to the ſanguine mind of Peregrine, appeared title-deeds of eſtates. The ſcene was completed with all the other appendages of buſineſs and apparent credit: writing-deſks, long tables covered with green baize, and a multitude of writing and copying-clerks. But the attention of Peregrine was particularly attracted to an elderly gentleman, in the half-dreſs regimentals of an Officer, whoſe towering haughtineſs of look beſpoke his rank and command.

Peregrine found that he was not deceived in his conjectures; for a gentleman who, like himſelf, appeared an applicant, but who was in reality one of the fellows belonging to the office, whiſpered in his ear that it was General ———, who was deſirous of advancement, and had been making an application to the office, with the offer of a large premium for

for that purpoſe. Peregrine was thus confirmed in his hopes.

Being demanded upon the ſubject of his buſineſs, and having replied, he was directed to an elderly man, who was ſeated at an oppoſite deſk, and was habited in the uſual dreſs and broad brim of a Quaker. He did not return even an anſwer of civility to the application of Peregrine, who, however, liked this the better, as he conſtrued it into the rudeneſs of conſcious wealth.

He told Peregrine that ſo many applications had been made, that he could do no more buſineſs that morning; but, as he ſeemed preſſing, he would hear what he had to ſay. Peregrine then reminded him of his advertiſement, the place in the T——— of three hundred pounds *per annum*, three hours' attendance in the day, and five hundred pounds for the purchaſe.

"And ſo you wiſh for this place, young man," ſaid the Quaker.

"Yes," replied Peregrine.

"I dare ſay you do," rejoined the fellow, with an affectation of raillery. "Yes, yes, a place of three hundred a-year is a very pretty thing. Many people may toil all their lives, and not procure ſo pretty a thing.—Yes, yes, I can believe that you wiſh for it."

"And I am willing to pay its purchaſe," ſaid Peregrine—"five hundred pounds."

"Yes, yes," replied the Quaker, "I can believe you there too, my friend.—Yes, there are few but would be willing to give five hundred pounds for a place of three hundred a-year. That is a year and a half's purchaſe; or, in other words, about ſeventy *per cent.* Yes, yes, I can believe that you are willing to get ſeventy *per cent.* for your money.

money. Yes, yes, you need not anſwer to this."

Peregrine here added that he was prepared with the money; and requeſted that the buſineſs might be diſpatched with as much haſte as poſſible.

"What," reſumed the Quaker, "you care not how ſoon you can come into poſſeſſion of ſeventy *per cent.* for your money. You care not how ſoon you can come into the poſſeſſion of a place of three hundred a-year. Very well, young man, very well. But theſe things are not to be done immediately. The place is in the gift of a Nobleman, and you muſt wait with ſome patience. Go—you may return to-morrow morning. I ſhall have an opportunity of ſeeing my Lord in the courſe of the day, and will ſpeak to him."

Peregrine here made a reſpectful bow, and was about to retire, when the Quaker ſummoned him back.

" You remember, young man, I ſuppoſe, that part of the advertiſement—'It is requeſted that none make application at this office but perſons of reſpectability, and ſuch as can procure proper teſtimonies to their good character and ſufficiency?"

Peregrine replied in the affirmative; and, upon the demand for reference, gave in the name of Sir Rupert Rupee.

" Sir Rupert Rupee," repeated the fellow; " very well—a very good reference. I think I remember him.—Pray, is he not a brother of Colonel Rupee?—I was well acquainted with the Colonel. Poor fellow, he fell under the walls of Seringapatam."

Peregrine replied that Sir Rupert had no brother.

" One

"One of the same name," resumed the Quaker. "Well, no matter; Sir Rupert is a very respectable man, and his testimony will be equally as good as would be that of the Colonel.—Well, I shall write, or call upon Sir Rupert before the matter is concluded. We are obliged, for our own character, and the credit of our office, to be thus cautious; for so many improper persons apply, that we might be led into many embarrassments."

Peregrine now departed, his head full of no other thoughts than his three hundred *per annum*. He was desired to return the same afternoon; and he waited for this time with so much impatience, that, during the whole course of a life of difficulty and uncertainty, no interval had been so painful.

He had no sooner gained his apartments, than one of the servants of Sir Rupert entered with a letter; adding, that the porter

who had brought it, waited below for an answer.

Upon the first sight of the characters, he recognised them, with equal surprise and transport, for those of his mistress. He tore it open with all the rapture of love; its contents were as follow:—

"SIR,

"I know you will receive this letter with as much pleasure as I send it. I have not time to enter into a minute relation of the circumstances which have led me to my present situation. It will be sufficient to say, that the low and even cruel persecution of the present wife of my father, compelled me to fly from his house, and to put myself under the protection of my maternal aunt.—

I reached

I reached London laſt night: my aunt has received me with more kindneſs than I expected; her indignation at my father's marriage with a woman ſo unworthy was, perhaps, the cauſe.—She is a woman of faſhion, and has therefore aſſigned me a ſuite of apartments, and permits me to receive what viſitors I chuſe.—I ſhall expect you this morning.

" Your's,

" CECILIA."

It is needleſs to ſay that Peregrine loſt not a moment. The porter, who ſerved him as his guide, carried him to an elegant houſe in the precincts of Portman Square. He was admitted by a ſervant, the ſplendour of whoſe livery beſpoke the faſhionable oſtentation of the

the miſtreſs. The aunt of Cecilia, Mrs. Southport, was a lady upon the very ſummit of the mode; her huſband had died *à la mode*, that is to ſay, by his own hand; her dower was *à la mode*—that is to ſay, two-thirds of the eſtate of her huſband; and, to conclude all, ſhe lived upon *à la mode*—that is to ſay, expended annually twice the amount of her income.

Some of our country readers will read this article with ſome ſurpriſe; it is nevertheleſs true, and as common in the town, as the contrary is in the country. There are ſuch things as gaming-tables, where, however Fortune may exerciſe her caprice upon the players, ſhe always ſmiles upon the lady of the houſe. De Moivre, in his Book of Chances, has forgotten to mention this grand exception to his leading canons; but however ſingular it may appear to the mathematicians, the lady

of the houſe is always a winner. The courſe of our hiſtory will allow us to enter into an explanation of this ſeeming paradox.

We ſhall leave to the conception of our readers what were the firſt emotions and expreſſions of rapture of Peregrine and Cecilia upon this unexpected interview. After their mutual pleaſure had ſomewhat ſubſided, Peregrine remembered the purpoſe upon which he had reſolved the preceding night. He juſtly conſidered that he ſhould never have a more favourable opportunity to preſs his ſuit than the preſent moment, and was therefore reſolved not to loſe it. He had ſome difficulty to break the ground; but having at length, perhaps abruptly enough, entered upon his ſubject, he proceeded with the uſual eloquence and the uſual earneſtneſs of a young lover.

"And what," continued he, "can we have further to wish?—Our united fortune, though too small for any purposes of luxury, will procure us a situation which will set us above dependance, and provide us at least with all the decencies of life. Believe me, my Cecilia, we are apt to measure happiness by a wrong standard. We reckon luxuries amongst necessities, and refuse the name of sufficiency to what is insufficient to gratify, *not our wants*, but our caprices. For our wants, even our conveniences, our humble capital is sufficient;—it will procure us, if carefully employed, an annual result, which will provide us with a house, furniture not contemptible, and the other necessaries of life, clothes and food, not unsuitable to that decorum which a middle state requires. How many are there who cannot boast even our small capital, and yet by an honest industry (I do

(I do not mean the induſtry of a mechanic, but an induſtry of mind), have raiſed themſelves to a ſtate of comfort and independence! Cecilia, dear Cecilia, let us not be affrighted by imaginary difficulties. If we mean to ſeek our happineſs from the ſplendours of life, from the luxuries of affluence, and the purſuits of pleaſure, our fortune is indeed very inſufficient; but if we are content to ſeek nothing in our *fortune* but *eaſe*, *decencies*, and *convenience*, and, with regard to our happineſs, to ſeek the whole of it from our mutual love—if we think that no enjoyments are ſo happy as thoſe of domeſtic life—no endearments ſo ſweet, ſo ſincere as thoſe of wedded love, we have enough. Yes, my Cecilia, the whole argument may be ſummed up in theſe two diſtinctions:—if we mean to ſeek our happineſs in our fortune, it is inſufficient; if we ſeek it in our love, and are content to expect nothing

nothing from our fortune but a ſufficiency to all the wants and conveniences of nature—in this caſe, I ſay, our capital is ample."

The bluſhes of Cecilia were a ſufficient argument of her acquieſcence.

Peregrine, however, with the ardour of a youthful lover, did not as yet deſiſt; he continued till he obtained ſomething more to his wiſhes than a tacit conſent. In a word, it was agreed between them that, as the nonage of Cecilia rendered it impoſſible to obtain a licence, the banns ſhould be publiſhed in the pariſh church of St. Giles's. Nor was there any danger of diſcovery; for beſides that the names of Cecilia and Peregrine were known but to few, Cecilia knew that her aunt was otherwiſe occupied than in an attendance on the Churches. With this permiſſion, Peregrine took his leave, leaving his miſtreſs in a ſtate of confuſion, and perhaps

ſomething

ſomething of ſatisfaction, which ſhe had ſome difficulty to conceal from the other viſitors of the day.

Peregrine loſt no time in the delivery of the names of Cecilia and himſelf to the officiating Curate of the pariſh; and having diſpatched this buſineſs, as the hour of appointment was now arrived, he haſtened to the office of ——— and Co. The Quaker received him with an appearance of the greateſt poſſible indifference; and Peregrine, as if a humble ſupplicant, had to repeat his bows before he could obtain even the notice of this fellow. Affecting, however, to ſee him at length—

"Well, young man, I ſee you are exact to your time;—but I am afraid the place will not ſuit you. I have made a ſlight miſtake in my advertiſement: I have mentioned that only three hours' attendance was required.

But

But as I wiſh that every thing ſhould be fair and open, and nothing of deception, I muſt confeſs I fear the place will not ſuit you; for they cannot diſpenſe with an attendance of three hours and a half—yes, young man, another half hour's attendance beyond what was ſtated in the advertiſement."

Peregrine, whoſe countenance had fallen at the firſt part of this addreſs, was recovered by this concluſion, and replied with much complacency, that he conſidered what he had mentioned as no obſtacle—that he had nothing to occupy his time—and that if ſix hours had been demanded, he ſhould have thought it no objection. He concluded by a compliment to the honourable candour of the Quaker; adding, that he was ſo perfectly convinced of his honour, that he left the whole affair to himſelf.

" Well,

" Well, Sir," reſumed the fellow, " if that is the caſe, I muſt tell you how far I have advanced. I have ſeen the Nobleman in whoſe gift the place is, and whoſe only inducement to ſuch a beſtowal of it is, that he wants money to complete a purchaſe. I have given him your card of reference; he allows it to be unexceptionable, and added that he was perſonally acquainted with Sir Rupert Rupee. It is neceſſary however to his honour and the reſponſibility annexed to his office, that the affair ſhould not be made public; he requires therefore the ſtricteſt ſecrecy to be obſerved; and, to this purpoſe, inſiſts that every thing ſhould be concluded without his appearance, and by my immediate agency. In a word, Sir, you have nothing to do but to pay the five hundred pounds into my hands, and your appointment will be immediately delivered. That you may be ſecure, however,

ever, and that no retraction of his Lordſhip, after he ſhall have received your money, ſhall endanger its loſs, upon your payment of the money, I will give you a check upon myſelf for the ſame.—This is what I have to ſay, young man."

The gentleman had ſcarcely concluded, when a ſtranger entered the counting-houſe, and advancing to the deſk of the Quaker, preſented a bill of a thouſand pounds for his acceptance. The Quaker, upon examining the bill, told the ſtranger that he did not like to have his bills or acceptances hawked about the town for diſcount; ſo that if he had any deſire of its immediate payment, he would diſcount it himſelf. The ſtranger thanked him, and accepted his offer. Upon this he preſented him with an order, on demand, upon a neighbouring banker."

" Carry

" Carry this," ſaid he, " and bring me word if it is paid without demur. Theſe gentlemen, the bankers, are ſo fond of the ſight and touch of money, that they demur even to the payment of the bills of their beſt friends."

The ſtranger upon this departed. The Quaker, affecting to attend to other buſineſs, left Peregrine ſtanding by himſelf; but at length, after ſome preliminary oſtentation of hurry, condeſcended again to addreſs him.

" You will remember," ſaid he, " that I corrected a ſmall error in my advertiſement—I mean with regard to the neceſſary attendance, which I at firſt ſtated to be three hours a day; but which I have ſince told you muſt be three hours and a half. It ſeems that the gentlemen in the Oppoſition, having nothing elſe to ſay, have lately reproached their adverſaries with a ſhameful neglect of the public accounts; and this

this has led our Miniſters to inſiſt upon a greater induſtry of the ſeveral clerks in the public offices. An attendance of three hours and a half a day is abſolutely neceſſary. I ſay this, young man; but I could wiſh every thing to be open, honourable, and candid between us."

By ſuch language as this, by every appearance of ſubſtance, and by the perfection of all the uſual appendages of buſineſs, the confidence of Peregrine was ſo fully excited, that he was about to deliver the money for the appointment, when the ſtranger reentered. To the demand of the Quaker whether the money had been paid upon his order, the ſtranger replied that it had.

"And without demur, hey?" ſaid the Quaker.

"Yes, without demur," replied the ſtranger.

The

The Quaker upon this nodded, and the ſtranger retired.

Peregrine no longer heſitated to pay into his hands the five hundred pounds.

"Well," reſumed the old gentleman, upon receiving it, "you may call again to-morrow, and you ſhall receive your appointment. But remember three hours and a half's attendance—remember three hours and a half."*

* If any one ſhould think this picture of the offices for the advertiſements of the ſale of places under Government to be over-coloured, let him read the firſt and beſt of our elemental books of police, Colquhoun, chapter the ſeventh; or of the practices of theſe pſeudo offices in general, in the reports of the trials of Lathorpe, Murray, &c. &c.—It is our purpoſe to exhibit the moſt comic ſcenes of life; and we do not remember this ſpecies of ſharping, however common and well known to exiſt, has yet been taken notice of either by our Dramatiſts or Novel writers.

Peregrine now left the office, and retired to his apartments with more than uſual ſpirits. His interview with his miſtreſs; the commencement of the firſt preparatory ſtep to their union; his hopes of an immediate and permanent independence by means of the income of his office; all theſe circumſtances concurred to raiſe his happineſs to an unuſual point.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

PEREGRINE ſcarcely enjoyed any ſleep the whole of the enſuing night; his mind was occupied with the thoughts of his opening proſpects, and with various plans for the expenditure of his now eminent income. One moment he reſolved, in the intervals of his attendance upon his office, to apply himſelf to ſome lucrative line of a liberal buſineſs, and thus augment his income to the very extent of his wiſhes. In another, he reſolved to dedicate his hours of vacation to the

improvement of his mind, and ſuch a cultivation of his talents in the knowledge of finance and diplomacy, that he might recommend himſelf to the notice and patronage of his ſuperior, and thus facilitate his riſe to the firſt employments of the State.

His dreams partook of the ſame colours of hope: one moment his fancy repreſented to him the brilliancy of a birth-night drawing-room, where his Cecilia, as Counteſs of ſomething, was introduced to the ſplendours of a Court, and carried away the palm of beauty from the circle of elegance; whilſt himſelf as a Premier, or Lord of the Treaſury, monopolized the gracious ear of his Sovereign, and diſpenſed diſtinction to his ſervile admirers by a look. Thoſe know nothing of our nature, who deny ſuch extravagance to be natural.

Having

Having dreſſed himſelf in the morning with more than uſual alacrity, and conſidered his engagements for the day, he departed upon a viſit to Cecilia, as the firſt upon his liſt of appointments.

It is unneceſſary to ſay that the interview of the lovers was more replete than uſual with their mutual ſatisfaction. Perhaps, during the whole period of what our poets call the wooing time of love, there is no moment more full of happineſs to both parties, than the interval between the licence and the final ceremony. It is then that hope penetrates and warms the ſoul with its moſt direct beam; it is then that we promiſe ourſelves that continued and uninterrupted happineſs which Nature, who is condemned to follow Imagination, can never realize. This, in a word, is the ſeaſon of hope.

Peregrine now explained to Cecilia the ſource and extent of his hopes; and the cheek of his miſtreſs glowed with all the brilliancy of youthful happineſs, to ſee them ſo well founded, and ſo ſoon to be realized. An income of three hundred a-year ſeemed an ample fortune to one who, with all the tenderneſs and all the innocence of primeval nature, would have been content to have ſhared the ſociety of Peregrine upon the fare of a hermit—cruſt and roots. Peregrine, who knew more of life than Cecilia, though the ſum even of his knowledge was little, was duped into the ſame ſanguine hopes.

"Three hundred a-year!" thought he; "what could I do with more?—In the ſociety of my Cecilia, what more can I wiſh?"

So wholly did they forget the lapſe of time in theſe pleaſing reflections, and more pleaſing endearments (for in the near approach

of

of their union, Cecilia had ſomewhat receded from her natural reſerve), that they did not think of ſeparating till Cecilia was ſummoned to dinner. Peregrine then took a haſty leave. Upon a ſight of the firſt clock, as he was paſſing through the ſtreets, he found it to approach the time at which he was to attend the advertiſement office. With all the hopes of a young lover, therefore, he haſtened towards the ſpot, whence he expected to return a clerk of the T———.

He was met in his way by a ſervant of Sir Rupert, who put a letter into his hands, the contents of which were as follow:—

"SIR,

"As aſſignees to Mr. F——, of Clerkenwell, wine-merchant, and now a bankrupt, we muſt ſolicit the immediate

discharge of the obligation, in which you have taken upon yourself a debt of Mr. Hastings, due to the said Mr. F——. We are sorry to press you thus unexpectedly; and add, with still more regret, that, as the affairs of the bankrupt require an immediate settlement, unless this demand is immediately complied with, we shall be compelled to follow it up by an instant process.

" We are, Sir,

" Your humble and obedient servants,

" PETER GRIPER.

" HEZEKIAH FLEECE.

" *Fleet Street, Monday morning.*"

The contents of this letter startled Peregrine, and more particularly so when, upon an

an examination of the date, he found that it ought to have been delivered a fortnight back. The ſervant, with many apologies, explained this circumſtance: he ſaid that he had taken it from a perſon, whom he imagined to be a clerk, upon the day of its date; that he intended to deliver it the ſame evening, but not having ſeen Peregrine, had forgotten it, and taken it into the country with him. Peregrine accepted his excuſes, though he ſaw much to apprehend in his negligence.

The amount of the debt was ſuch as might have well ſtartled Peregrine—it was three hundred pounds. Peregrine was for ſome time loſt in terror upon this thus ſudden incident; and it was not for ſome moments that he could recover himſelf ſufficiently to take a reſolution. But at length the thoughts of his now expected promotion to an income

of three hundred a-year, and an office of the dignity of a Clerkſhip of the T———, reſtored him to ſome tranquillity, and inſpired him with a plan of ſome ſpeciouſneſs. He juſtly conſidered that the affairs of the bankruptcy, according to the uſual nature of ſuch affairs, could not be ſettled in a ſhort period; that the aſſignees therefore did not ſo much require any immediate money, as a ſatisfactory ſecurity that it would be paid at the time of demand. He propoſed, therefore, to give them a ſecurity for its payment within ſix months upon the income of his office; and he was perſuaded that they would think it their intereſt not to reject a ſecurity of this nature. In the meantime Haſtings would return, and he would thus be releaſed from any further embarraſſments.

His tranquillity being reſtored by this ſpecious plan, he again haſtened his ſteps; when, upon

upon paſſing through Cranbourn Alley, he was ſtopped by his friend L——. Upon Peregrine's exclamation of ſurpriſe that he was ſtill in town, he told him that he was upon the point of departure; the old gentleman himſelf, old Method, had arrived in town, and paid him a viſit.

Peregrine gave a ſtart upon this information; he feared that the father of Cecilia might have traced her, and thus impede the advance of their union. L—— did not obſerve theſe emotions of his friend, but thus continued—

"It ſeems," ſaid he, "that a circumſtance of a ludicrous nature has happened to the old gentleman: his daughter, for ſome cauſe or other, has eloped from his houſe, and the old fellow is upon the purſuit of her. Pray Heaven he may miſs his game! for I cannot help thinking that a lover is concerned,

and therefore they have my ſympathy.—And if this be indeed the cauſe, the old fellow's purſuit and his extravagant rage are ſtill more unreaſonable; for as he has ſo lately played the fool himſelf, in marrying an intriguing French girl, the former humble companion of his daughter, he ſhould endure the folly of his daughter, methinks, with more patience."

L—— ſaw the countenance of Peregrine exhibited ſome appearance of perplexity.—Peregrine, upon his demanding the cauſe, put into his hands the letter of the aſſignees.

L—— endeavoured to exculpate Haſtings; but Peregrine ſtopped him, by an aſſurance that ſuch an exculpation was wholly unneceſſary, as he was already ſufficiently convinced of the innocence of his friend's intention.

"Every thing has happened," ſaid he, "through the unfortunate bankruptcy of the

creditor; and as this could not be in the expectation of Haſtings, ſo neither could this ſudden effect. I can impute nothing but to my own ill fortune."

"But what do you intend to do?" ſaid L——; "the debt is large."

"If I can give ſufficient ſecurity for its payment," reſumed Peregrine, "I ſhall have nothing to apprehend. I may thus defer the payment till the return of Haſtings."

"But this ſecurity," rejoined L——, "I ſhould ſuppoſe is equally as impoſſible as the payment."

"Perhaps not ſo impoſſible as you ſuppoſe," replied Peregrine.

Peregrine here entered into a detailed relation of his expectations, his Clerkſhip of the T———, his income of three hundred a-year, and his ſeventy *per cent.* for his money. It is impoſſible to deſcribe the mixed

mixed air of ridicule and concern with which L—— regarded Peregrine during this narrative; when he had finiſhed, he could no longer retain his propenſity to ridicule, but burſt into a loud laugh.

Peregrine in ſome ſurpriſe, and not without confuſion, demanded the cauſe.

"And ſo you have paid the five hundred pounds?" ſaid L——, with a renewed ſmile.

"Yes," replied Peregrine; "the Nobleman, from whom I am to receive the appointment of my office, is in want of money to complete a purchaſe; beſides, as there is a degree of reſponſibility attached to the diſpoſal of offices and places under Government, my Lord is deſirous that the affair ſhould not become public, and to ſecure ſecrecy, his Lordſhip inſiſted that every thing ſhould paſs between the agent and myſelf."

"Very

" Very well," ſaid L——, " my Lord is a man of prudence.—But pray, my friend, are you equally ſecured upon your part, that the agent ſhall not appropriate your money to himſelf?"

" Yes," replied Peregrine, " I have his note here for the whole ſum."—Saying this, he put it into his hands.—" What think you?" reſumed he, as ſoon as he had given L—— time to read it.

" I think," replied L——, " that I have never heard of a more complete dupe than yourſelf, or more complete ſharpers than the agents of my Lord. In a word, my friend, you have fallen into a ſnare of a moſt profligate ſet of ſharpers; and your money—your five hundred pounds, is as effectually loſt, as if you had thrown it into the ſea. Had I not lived upon the town longer than yourſelf, I ſhould not have believed ſuch a trick, and more particularly ſo complete a ſucceſs."

Peregrin

Peregrine was aghaſt at theſe words; and it was ſome moments before he had ſufficiently recovered the ſcattered powers of his mind, to requeſt that L—— would enter into a further explanation.

"There are two ſpecies of ſharpers," ſaid L——, "whoſe practices are more artful and more ſucceſsful than thoſe of any other of their fraternity. The firſt of theſe are what are called the Diſcounters, thoſe who diſcount bills; and the others, the advertiſers of offices under Government, regimental exchanges, &c. &c. I mention them both, becauſe they are both uſually exerciſed by the ſame perſons, and nearly in the ſame way. The qualities neceſſary to theſe ſharpers are a genteel exterior, and a demeanour apparently artleſs and without deſign. For theſe reaſons I have often wondered that they have not been expoſed upon the ſtage; for

whilſt

whilſt their practices might furniſh a moſt ample vein of humour, they have nothing of that vulgarity which could degrade the dignity of the Muſe of Comedy. I will explain the practices of the Diſcounters, as I was once a dupe to one of them myſelf.

" They advertiſe that they will diſcount, upon a moderate premium, the good bills, not only of tradeſmen, but every kind of houſekeepers, or people of known property. Upon the credit of this, you carry your bill to their office, where you ſee every oſtentation of buſineſs, and are introduced to a fellow, a confederate of the gang, who acts in the capacity of their clerk.

' Sir, will you be kind enough to leave the note? The principal is not at preſent within; but if you will leave it, and call within an hour, you ſhall receive the money.'

" You may, perhaps, ſhew ſome marks of

of diſlike, of heſitation upon this propoſal. The fellow puts into your hand a check upon the office, or his note of hand; and, under this ſecurity, your caution is diſperſed, and you commit the note into his hands.—And here you may bid it a long farewel, till the arrival of the day when you are to be called upon for payment; for when you return to the office at the appointed time, if your note was of a large amount, or if, together with other notes which they may have received, it makes a large amount, you find the office ſhut up, and the fellows off. If the note of itſelf is not ſufficient to induce them to this ſtep, they contrive to put you off another day; in the courſe of which time, ſuch is the fertility which this town affords of dupes, they ſeldom fail of a very ſufficient harveſt."

"But the appearance of ſubſtance, and all the appendages of buſineſs, even to a point

point of oſtentation!" ſaid Peregrine, now in a ſtate of the greateſt alarm.

"This appearance and theſe appendages," reſumed L——, "are all neceſſary parts of their plot; and if you will be pleaſed to conſider a moment, are the inſtruments of their ſucceſs, and the means by which they inſpire their dupes with the neceſſary confidence. Conſider, likewiſe, at how ſmall an expence all theſe appendages are procured:—a ſtrong box with nothing in it; a few deal tables and boards covered with green baize; a couple of writing clerks, with a huge folio book of accounts, and a few walnut-tree deſks, are the uſual and neceſſary appendages of theſe fellows; and the whole amount of their value is ſhort of five pounds."

"But the bill of a thouſand pounds which I ſaw them diſcount," ſaid Peregrine.

"You

"You saw no such thing," rejoined L——. "You saw, indeed, a fellow enter, who presented such a bill; and you heard him, upon his return from his errand, report that the banker had duly honoured the order. This fellow was one of the confederates, and not the least of the necessary instruments."

"Is it possible," said Peregrine, "that I have fallen the dupe of so clumsy a contrivance!"

"It is not a clumsy contrivance," rejoined L——, "or perhaps you would not have become a dupe. It is perfect in all its parts, and in a society of sharpers, would do no little credit to the *dramatis personæ*."

"But the General," said Peregrine.

"As to the General, he was another confederate," said L——; "and from the eminence of his part, I am inclined to believe the manager of the company. This, in fact, is

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an appendage which they never neglect; for they well know that of all prejudices, there is none so imposing as that of rank, and that the wisest of us make little hesitation in playing the fool in the company of our betters. They know, moreover, that nothing is more easy to be imitated than the proud strut, the grave demeanour, and the air of disdain which we connect with our ideas of superior rank. It is perhaps not much to the credit of our men of fashion, that they are never so well represented as by the most profligate of our sharpers."

As the office was now within a short distance, they hastened their steps, Peregrine still retaining some hopes that the suspicions of his friend might be found groundless.—These, however, were dissipated almost as soon as formed; for upon his arrival at the door of the office, he found every thing barricadoed

barricadoed and deſerted, as L—— had predicted. He diſcovered that he was not the only dupe, the door being ſurrounded by a multitude of others, who vented their complaints againſt the cheats. His attention was more particularly called to the loud anger of a perſon of the appearance of a country gentleman, and who, as he afterwards diſcovered, was a Norfolk Squire. This gentleman, as it appeared by his own complaints, had been allured by their advertiſements, and had been negotiating with them for a place in the Board of Admiralty; and, to ſecure the ſucceſs of his application, had already paid upwards of a thouſand pounds, of all which he was now a loſer. Lieutenants, ſailors, &c. bore no ſmall proportion in this number of dupes.

Peregrine, aſhamed any longer to appear of their party, took the arm of L——, and with

with mingled emotions hurried him from the doors.

Nothing hurt Peregrine with ſo much effect in this loſs, as the ſituation to which it reduced him with regard to his approaching union with his miſtreſs. But a few hours before he had been congratulating her upon the promiſe of happineſs which Fortune held out to them. He had been ſettling with her the plan of their future life; he had even appointed an hour the following morning to take her to look at a houſe, which he intended for his future reſidence. There was now an end of all this; he was not poſſeſſed of another farthing in the world; and thus, from the very ſummit of hope, was ſunk into the loweſt depth of deſpair—a reverſe ſufficient to overthrow a ſtronger mind than that of Peregrine.

Theſe

Theſe reflections had ſunk him into that ſilence, the ſure attendant upon misfortune; the agitation of his mind was ſtill more evident from the diſcompoſed air of every feature in his countenance; his ſteps were hurried and unequal. L—— was fearful of ſome deſperate purpoſe; he endeavoured, therefore, with a true knowledge of the nature of the paſſions, to divert his mind to other objects; or at leaſt ſink his ſenſe of his own calamity, by a diverſion of his thoughts to thoſe of others.

"However great the addreſs of our Engliſh cheats," ſaid he, "they muſt yield to thoſe of the Continent. The Pariſian ſharpers are as ſuperior to us in the arts of impoſture, as in thoſe of the mode. It is not a long time ſince that an Engliſh gentleman, upon his arrival in Paris, became the dupe of a moſt extraordinary fraud.—

He

He was received, as he descended from his carriage, by a gentleman, who introduced himself as Monsieur T——. The English gentleman had letters to Monsieur T——, a personage of high consideration in the new Government; and therefore, without further hesitation, delivered them to his representative. The fictitious Monsieur T—— gave him an open letter, upon the perusal of which the English gentleman found it to be a letter from his father, recommending himself *(i. e.* the English gentleman) to Monsieur T——. Upon the invitation of Monsieur therefore, who represented to him the extravagance and inconvenience of the French inns, he consented to accompany him to his hotel; and being led to a magnificent house, consented to remain there during his stay at Paris. He was still more pleased at the gaiety of the nightly *soupées* and assemblies which were

held at the hotel; and though in the firſt week he loſt an immenſe ſum of money at gaming, he had good hopes of retrieving it by better ſucceſs in fortune.

" Matters had proceeded thus about a fortnight, when the apartments of the hotel, on the night of a moſt brilliant aſſembly, were entered by the officers of Fouche, Miniſter of the Police; and every member of the company, even to the Engliſh gentleman himſelf, were hurried to the common gaol. When they were taken before the ſitting magiſtracy on the following morning, the Engliſh gentleman, to his equal confuſion and aſtoniſhment, diſcovered that Monſieur T——-, the friend of his father, was no other than the moſt notorious ſharper in France; that the ladies of his company were only hired proſtitutes, and that the greater part of thoſe, to whom he had been introduced as to the

the moſt celebrated perſons of the time, were the refuſe of gaols, and the periodical returns of the galleys. In a word, he had ſome difficulty to obtain his releaſe; as, from the circumſtance of his having been found in their ſociety, he was ſuſpected to be himſelf one of their gang. He afterwards diſcovered that the valet, whom he had taken on his arrival in Calais, was one of the deputies of the gang; and that from him they had procured the information which enſured the ſucceſs of their contrivance."

L—— was here interrupted by the addreſs of two fellows to Peregrine and himſelf—which of them was Mr. Peregrine. Peregrine anſwered to his name without ſuſpicion, upon which the fellows produced a writ, and arreſted him at the ſuit of Meſſrs. Fleece and Griper.

Peregrine ſtarted, examined the writ, and with the feelings of the moſt miſerable wretch living, followed. The fellows endeavoured to perſuade him to await the iſſue of the affair at their lock-up houſe; but as Peregrine knew it could have but one iſſue, he reſolved to anticipate it, and deſired to be led to the Fleet Priſon.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

IT was ſome days after Peregrine was thus lodged in the Fleet, before he could recover ſufficient tranquillity to review his ſituation, and ſummon his reaſon to his aſſiſtance. It requires a more than common fortitude, perhaps ſomething of unnatural inſenſibility, to retain the powers of reaſoning, in their former vigour, amidſt the ſhocks of misfortune; and though Peregrine had an underſtanding not inferior to others, he had nothing of the apathy of ſtoiciſm. It muſt be confeſſed that he felt this ſudden fall of his hopes.

L——, following the impulſe of his friendſhip, had employed this interval in efforts to ſoften the creditors; but all his labours, and ten thouſand times more, were fruitleſs: he had to deal with men of buſineſs—with men who regulated every thing, even to their ideas of juſtice, upon the courſe of trade.

In the progreſs of our hiſtory, we have often had recourſe to words which, from their novelty, or peculiarity of ſignification, we have thought it our duty to explain. The *courſe of trade* are words of this nature; and for the uſe of ſuch of our readers as are not of the fraternity of traders, or of ſuch as, although members of the ſame fraternity, govern themſelves by other principles, we ſhall here enter more at large into a diſcuſſion upon the words—*courſe of trade.*

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The *courſe of trade* then, according to the moſt general definition, is that ſyſtem of morality, that code of ethics, which regulates the dealings of men of buſineſs, which enumerates, impoſes, and affixes the limits of their reſpective duties. In a word, it is a kind of common-law of commerce, an unwritten rule, having neither any exiſtence in, nor in many caſes any connection with, the poſitive ſtatute laws, either of nature or nations. Such is the courſe of trade.

To explain it by examples: it is the courſe of trade to aſſiſt any members of their fraternity, upon their entrance into buſineſs, with a large and liberal credit; but ſhould any misfortune incapacitate him from paying a bill of ten pounds upon an appointed day, and an affixed hour, it is likewiſe the courſe of trade to deliver him up to utter ruin—to poſt his bill, and arreſt his perſon.

It is, moreover, the courſe of trade to give credit to many who have no appearance of a ſufficient ſubſtance for reſponſibility, and thus perhaps, with a ſpecious humanity, relieving their wants; but after the expiration of a few months, the courſe of trade requires their arreſt, impriſonment, and final ruin.

It is, laſtly, the courſe of trade to detain in priſon even ſuch debtors as their creditors well know can never diſcharge their debts. It is indeed true that the detention of ſuch debtors is only of a further expence to their creditors, and thus aggravates their firſt loſs. It is equally true that the debtors, if relieved from their confinement, might earn ſomething by their labour, which might go towards the diſcharge of their debts; but the courſe of trade, with the uſual inflexibility of legal wiſdom, refuſes to yield to ſuch conſiderations. Such is the courſe of trade.

Having

Having thus fully explained the term, our readers will not be ſurpriſed when we relate that all the interceſſion of L—— produced no other fruit than a repeated, and at length rude reply that Peregrine muſt remain in priſon till he diſcharged his debt; that it was nothing to them in what manner it had been contracted, whether it was his own debt, or an obligation for the payment of that of another; it was due in the courſe of trade, and in the courſe of trade muſt they compel its payment. Such was the reſult of all the efforts of L——.

L—— for ſome time concealed this diſappointment from Peregrine, and aſſiſted him to make the arrangements for his ſtay in the priſon. The low ſtate of the finances both of Peregrine and of himſelf were no ſmall obſtacles to this ſettlement.

"Is it poſſible," ſaid Peregrine to L——, "that in this profeſſed abode of Poverty, ſuch extortion is not only prâctiſed, but countenanced by the ſuperiors?"

"It is indeed a ſubject of regret," anſwered L——; "and what, more than other ſubjects, calls for the interference of higher powers. I will venture to aſſert that there are many, even at this preſent time, within the walls of this priſon, who have paid to the extortion of the officers thrice the amount of what would have diſcharged their original debt. This is the moſt lamentable defect of our preſent debt laws."

This dialogue was interrupted by the entrance of a fellow, who demanded with the uſual inſolence of low office, the week's rent of Peregrine's apartment. Upon his firſt entrance into the priſon, by the advice of L——, he had conſented to ſhare an apartment

ment with another priſoner, and expected, upon theſe circumſtances, that the charge would have been moderate. He was called upon, however, for a guinea for his half of the week's rent; and, though this was one-third of all the money he poſſeſſed in the world, he found it neceſſary to pay it.—Another demand of a different kind was a ſtill more conſiderable deduction; he was called upon for a ſubſcription to the coals, candles, &c. of the common room. Whilſt he was ſecretly enraged at theſe repeated extortions, a fellow-priſoner entered his apartment, and reminding him that he had not as yet paid his *garniſh*, made a third demand, with which he was equally compelled to comply. Being now ſummoned to dinner at an ordinary for the better kind of debtors, L—— took his leave, but with a promiſe of a ſpeedy return.

Upon taking his ſeat at the table, the ſurpriſe of Peregrine was again excited by the air of indifference upon the features of the greater part of the company. The ſupply upon the table was plentiful and of the beſt kind; but it was the rule that, before any one took his ſeat, he ſhould pay the reckoning of the day. Peregrine depoſited the ſum demanded, and was thus reduced to his laſt half-guinea.

The fellow-lodger of Peregrine introduced him to the ſociety at table; and, in the intervals of the removes, explained to him the circumſtances and leading features of their fellows.

One of the ſociety, who expected his releaſe on the following day, added to the dinner an entertainment of wine, and a deſſert; and could Peregrine have forgotten his ſituation, and his now loſt miſtreſs, he would have

have enjoyed the novelty of ſuch a ſcene within the walls of a priſon. His fellow-priſoner, whether from habit or inſenſibility, ſeemed more reconciled to his condition; and with a loquacity which would not have been unpleaſant at any other time, thus deſcribed his fellow-priſoners.

"Our preſident," ſaid he, "at the head of our table, is a man of family, and ſuch faſhionable connections that, without having any pretenſions to prophecy, I will predict he will not be long of our ſociety. Being a younger ſon, he ſet out, as they call it, without a ſhilling; but being of a tolerable figure and of muſcular ſtrength, he ſoon recommended himſelf to a certain fat Counteſs; he was accordingly invited to her parties, and whatever diſputes might happen, ſettled them to the intereſt and ſatisfaction of his patroneſs. He always played high, and by the management

ment of his patroneſs, has been uſually ſucceſsful. About a year ſince, they took an elegant houſe, the oſtenſible tenant however being the gentleman himſelf. Every Wedneſday and Friday they opened it for the reception of company; and, after having fleeced them, endeavoured to conſole them by a moſt luxurious ſupper, moſt delicious wines, and moſt unreſtrained freedom on the part of all the ladies preſent. Their winnings, as you may well imagine, in the courſe of the year were immenſe; they divided them equally, and each, as indeed they had good reaſon to be, was ſatisfied with their part. There was one thing, however, which was not equally to their ſatisfaction: the expenditure of the houſe, which was as yet ſtanding upon the books of the tradeſmen, was in ſome proportion to their winnings; had they diſcharged, therefore, all ſuch demands, it would have made

made no ſmall diminution of their ſhares. Each was equally unwilling to conſent to this diſcharge. It was at length agreed between them that the gentleman, this man of honour, ſhould declare himſelf inſolvent—ſhould ſuffer an arreſt from the duped tradeſmen—and ſhould for ſome time take up his abode in the Fleet. In the meantime, the lady, the Right Honourable Counteſs of ———, was to employ her intereſt with her friends, and by repreſenting the cauſe of the poor gentleman's ruin, *i. e.* his extravagant generoſity in the entertainments he had given them, was to ſqueeze out a ſubſcription for his releaſe.—The tradeſmen are, in the meantime, dealt with by the gentleman's attorney, and have been induced to conſent to take fourteen ſhillings in the pound of their reſpective debts. The matter, I hear, is now in train, and the gentleman expects his releaſe every hour."

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The companion of Peregrine related many other circumſtances of the ſame nature, with regard to others of the ſociety; but we ſhall paſs them over, as we fear they will give as little entertainment to the reader as they did to Peregrine.

As they were retiring to their apartment, a fellow-priſoner took the arm of Peregrine, and taking him into a private corner of the common room, thus addreſſed him—

"I do not know, Sir, to what cauſe you owe your preſent confinement, whether to accidents out of your own power, or to any thing leſs reputable. I am willing, however, from ſomething ingenuous in your appearance, to believe the former; and therefore think it my duty to put you upon your guard againſt the perſon with whom you ſhare your apartment. He is one of the moſt infamous of the

the inhabitants of the priſon, and is more ſuited to the cell of a felon, than to a confinement which is too often only the abode of misfortune. He is a lawyer, of the name of Ferret; and, by ill practices, had ſucceeded in amaſſing a conſiderable fortune. His profligate extravagance kept pace with his other wickedneſs; and thus having expended the fruits of former crimes, and no new prey being at hand, he is at length become one of our ſociety. He may perhaps ſeek to exerciſe his infamous talents even within the walls of a priſon; and as you lie moſt in his way, you may be the ſubject of his firſt attempt. I repeat, therefore, have a care of him!"

Peregrine, in ſome aſtoniſhment, thanked the gentleman for this advice; but as he had now nothing further to loſe, and as his mind was at preſent occupied with other thoughts,

it

it ſo wholly eſcaped his memory, that he remembered nothing of it as he entered his apartment.

CHAP. VIII.

No part of the time, which he was thus compelled to paſs within the walls of a priſon, was more intolerable to Peregrine than when he retired to his bed, and withdrew to the indulgence of his thoughts in ſolitude and ſilence. It was then that his former and preſent ſituation paſſed in review before his mind; it was then that his former hopes and preſent

preſent diſappointment excited emotions of the greateſt bitterneſs.

The ſituation of his miſtreſs was what firſt preſented itſelf in the group of melancholy; the preparatory ſtep to their union, the publication of banns, was even now proceeding, but their happy concluſion was impoſſible. What could his miſtreſs think of his abſence?—Was it not neceſſary that he ſhould give her notice of his preſent condition?—Yet what other effect would this produce, but that communicating to another, and to one whom he regarded with ſo much affection, a ſhare of the affliction which ſo much agitated himſelf?

Was there any hope of a better event in future?—None. He knew not even where to ſeek his releaſe. Sir Rupert was abſent; or had he even been upon the ſpot, what claim had he upon him to a ſervice like this?

Sir

Sir Rupert, indeed, was not without generosity; he had, however, already reaped the fruit of that generosity, and loſt it by his imprudent credulity. From Sir Rupert, therefore, neither in juſtice nor generoſity had he any thing further to expect.

When he revolved theſe thoughts in his mind, he at length formed the generous purpoſe of yielding his pretenſions to Cecilia.

"Our union," ſaid he, "has become impoſſible;—our love, therefore, can only terminate in diſappointment. Why then indulge a paſſion which muſt continue to prey upon the peace of both?—Will it not be more generous and more conducive even to my own happineſs, to ſacrifice a claim which I can never advance, and the exiſtence of which only augments our mutual ſuffering?—My Cecilia may then ſubmit to the wiſhes of her father—may give her hand to my rival;

rival; and whatever may be my lot, will not be involved in my embarraſſments. She at leaſt will be happy."

Nothing hurt him more amidſt theſe reflections than the abſence of his friend L——. Two days, and the greater part of a third, had now paſſed, and he had neither ſeen nor heard any thing of him. His ready aſſiduity, his prompt attention on the firſt days of the misfortune of Peregrine, led him to expect a conduct of a very different nature. Peregrine had read the proverb, that friends are but ſummer birds; and thus accounted in his own mind for the neglect of L——. He did not, however, the leſs feel its cruelty.

In aſſigning this cauſe for the abſence of L——, he was more than uſually unjuſt; for this cold kind of prudence was not amongſt the qualities of L——. It will be neceſſary, however,

however, to add ſomething upon this ſubject.

In the firſt days of Peregrine's arreſt, in that confidence which is always inſpired by the generous tenderneſs of thoſe who do not deſert us in our calamity, he had concealed nothing from L——; he had related to him his love for Cecilia, the ſteps which he had already taken towards their union, and the obſtacles which had been oppoſed by the father of his miſtreſs. L—— was thus led to the concluſion, that the affair of his arreſt ought not to be concealed from his miſtreſs; but as he found, upon a propoſal of this communication, that Peregrine was more averſe to it than to any thing elſe, he did not repeat it.

But when he revolved every thing in his own mind, as well the near approach of the union of Cecilia and Peregrine, as the force

of the objections which had been made by Peregrine, he judged that the former rendered it a ſpecies of duty to acquaint Cecilia with what had happened; and that the latter, as having no foundation but in a falſe pride, merited no regard. He ſaw, moreover, no other reſource to ſupply the neceſſities of Peregrine; for however willing upon his own part to contribute himſelf, his powers were not equal to his inclination. On the day following this communication of L—— to Cecilia, that is to ſay, when the young lady had recovered ſufficient tranquillity, Peregrine received the letter, of which the contents were as follow:—

"I need not ſay that I feel the cruelty of your reſerve in a moment like this,

this. Have we not now attained the point where all falſe delicacy, all miſtaken pride ſhould ceaſe?—or were we about to enter into the neareſt of all affinities, at a moment when neither had any confidence in the other?—But if the near approach of our union did not demand ſuch confidence, how little generous muſt you think me, when you refuſe it upon much ſtronger reaſons! You are in misfortune, and yet refuſe to apply to your friends.—Farewel at preſent!—but remember that I conſider your condition as a mutual calamity; and that I ſhould think myſelf unworthy the honourable name of a wife, if I could not feel a ſympathy in your ſlighteſt uneaſineſs. I rejoice that you have nothing to accuſe yourſelf of.

"CECILIA."

It

It is needleſs to relate the immediate effect which this letter produced upon the mind of Peregrine. From the loweſt depths of deſpair he appeared to be raiſed to the higheſt of the gilded pinnacles of hope; from that depreſſion of mind, that morbid melancholy, the moſt fatal in the black train of misfortune; he was now recovered to ſomething of gaiety;—the blaze indeed was that of a moment, but it was a moment which might almoſt counterpoiſe a full day of miſery.

Theſe feelings however, as we have ſaid, were thoſe of a moment; a reflection ſucceeded which baniſhed his ſatisfaction.

"Is it poſſible," ſaid he, "that I can wiſh to give the dower of miſery to my generous Cecilia?—I am myſelf ſinking under the weight of my burden; can I deſire to transfer a part of it to the weaker ſhoulders of my miſtreſs?—Cannot I be miſerable

myſelf, but that, like the tempter, I muſt endeavour to involve others in my miſery?—The union, therefore, of Cecilia and myſelf is impoſſible. Yes, I muſt reſign her. I muſt reſtore to her that liberty, which ſhe may diſpoſe of according to the views and wiſhes of her father. Nor will a reſolution like this be of leſs advantage to myſelf:—I can ſupport the miſery of my condition as long as I am perſuaded that my Cecilia will not partake of it. I ſhall be rid of deſires which I can only indulge to my diſappointment. I yield nothing but what can never be my own. Yes, Cecilia, I reſign you!"

This reſolution was no ſooner taken than executed. Having written a tender farewel to his miſtreſs, he wrote a ſecond letter to her father, and in both reſigned all pretenſions. That he might have no time to change his purpoſe, he had no ſooner

finiſhed

finiſhed them, than he hurried them to the poſt.

He had no ſooner again retired to his apartment, after this concluſion of the affair, than his former melancholy returned, and preyed on him with a more venomous tooth. His ſpirits had been hitherto ſupported by his reflections upon the fidelity of his miſtreſs; and when the ſenſe of his miſery was ſharpeſt, he yet found ſomething of conſolation in ſuch thoughts. The ſublime apoſtrophe of the ſtoics to Virtue—"Oh Fortune! thou mayſt deprive me of every thing elſe—but Virtue, my miſtreſs and my Queen, ſhall defy thy efforts,"—he was ready to apply to his Cecilia. His Cecilia was now loſt, reſigned, rejected. It is true, indeed, that this reſignation had proceeded from himſelf; but whilſt he was about it, his ſpirit had been ſupported by a kind of dignity in the thing, a

ſpecies of exalted ſentiment, which had led him to prefer the happineſs of his miſtreſs to himſelf.

His mind had now ſunk to its wonted level, and he awoke again to a thorough ſenſe of the miſery of his condition. Every thing around him, the loud blaſphemy, the ſhameleſs profligacy, and, in the lower herd of the debtors, all the appendages of poverty in its moſt diſguſting form, tended to augment this perception; and nothing but an innate piety, and rooted principle of religion, could have withheld him from terminating an exiſtence thus wretched.

To ſuch reflections, to ſuch a corroſive melancholy, was the mind of Peregrine a prey during the ſilence and ſolitude of night. Such is the pillow of the impriſoned debtor, ſuch the repoſe of deſpair. Such is the condition of many, whoſe only fault is that they partake

partake the nature of man, are ſubject to the accidents of Fortune, and have fallen its victims. We have laws;—when will they awake, and correct this inhumanity?

CHAP. IX.

WE have already exhibited an outline of the character of Ferret; as he plays a conſiderable part in the cataſtrophe of our hiſtory, it will be neceſſary to fill up our ſketch by entering into a more full detail.

The father of Ferret was what is called a land-ſteward; who having entered into his ſtewardſhip, according to the vulgar phraſe,

without a penny, had the good luck to amaſs no inconſiderable fortune. At a proper age he bound his eldeſt ſon, young Ferret, an apprentice to an attorney, the famous, or rather infamous T——, formerly of Cheſter, upon whoſe monument it has juſtly been inſcribed, that he had ruined more families than the whole body of the moſt profligate part of his fraternity.

Under ſuch a preceptor, it is no wonder that young Ferret gained a full knowledge of the worſt part of his profeſſion. In a word, what with his own natural talents, and the cultivated genius of his maſter, in the ſecond year of his apprenticeſhip he was the moſt thorough bred pettifogger, or, in other words, the moſt thorough bred rogue which the County Palatine could boaſt. His maſter beheld his progreſs with aſtoniſhment, and embracing him with rapture, hailed the young

young Ferret a worthy ſucceſſor to himſelf.

With theſe talents, it is no wonder that he was the idol of a certain ſpecies of gentlemen, who are connected no leſs by the affinity of their mutual practices, than by a kind of general reſemblance with the loweſt part of the profeſſion of the law; a profeſſion which, if it can boaſt of ſome of the wiſeſt and beſt of men of the kingdom, may at the ſame time exhibit its proportion of rogues. Young Ferret therefore was a conſtant attendant at the aſſizes of his native county; and by his knowledge of the forms of indictment, and the equivocal part of our laws, had been the means of ſaving half the highwaymen and other felons of his diſtrict. In a word, it was not to the Jury, not to the Judge, not to the Counſel, but to the ſagacity

of Ferret that they looked for their acquittal. No flaw escaped his sagacity.

Upon the expiration of his apprenticeship he set up for himself, with no other stock than his roguery; but which, to confess the truth, was most consummate, and fully sufficient to every purpose. His practice it is needless to say was great, his profits being not only those of his business, but a liberal share of whatever prey he procured, were immense. In confidence of these circumstances he launched out into a higher and more ample sphere of business and life; and no horses, no dogs, no wines in the country could rival those of 'Squire Ferret.

But liberal as were these resources, they could but ill keep pace with a more liberal expenditure; no subaltern roguery could supply his princely magnificence, and it became

became neceſſary to have recourſe to more exalted, more dangerous, but at the ſame time more lucrative villany.

A diſcovery of one of theſe practices had compelled him at length to leave his native place; he changed his name, and ſought refuge in a diſtant village.

His verſatility was equal to every thing. As he could no longer continue to practiſe as an attorney, he purchaſed the houſe of a village apothecary, and actually entered into his buſineſs. Buchan's Family Phyſician ſupplied the place of a collegiate courſe; and though he occaſionally committed the moſt ſerious blunders, he contrived to maintain, and even to augment his reputation. The dead, as Moliere ſays, tell no tales; he was moreover in a village, and therefore out of the ſight of any of the profeſſion of more knowledge than himſelf. Add to this, that

none of these unlucky accidents occurred, but what he could give a clear and most imposing account of the natural causes: either the blood flowed too fast or too slow; or the humour coagulating about the heart, clogged the fountains of life. It would have excited the gravity of a philosopher to a smile, had he regarded the awkward admiration of the audience whilst their Doctor thus explained these fatal effects of his ignorance.

It was at this period that something occurred of unusual advantage to him, and which again restored him to public life, and replenished a purse now exhausted.

It is not to our purpose at present to relate what was this happy incident; it is sufficient to say that he returned upon the town, and, as another resource of his roguery, commenced money-lender. His profits were here equally great as in his former practices of an attorney; and

and by his *knowledge of the world*, and the *courſe of buſineſs*, he contrived by a deduction from the principal as a premium, or by an inſertion of a greater ſum in the bond than what he had given, to take ſeventy *per cent.* in deſpite of the law. His original fault, however, again attacked him: his propenſity to expence returned with his powers, and he was again reduced to his former neceſſities. His creditors had the good luck to anticipate his flight; and Lawyer Ferret, 'Squire Ferret, Doctor Ferret, or Ferret and Co. was at length lodged within the walls of the Fleet.

How he employed his time here, the reader may hereafter learn.

Such was the gentleman with whom Peregrine ſhared his apartment; and the reader will confeſs that the ſtranger was equally correct as friendly, who cautioned Peregrine againſt his fellow-lodger. Peregrine how-

ever having nothing to loſe, and being wholly occupied with other thoughts, had forgotten this advice almoſt as ſoon as given; and as Ferret had a tolerable air, a good addreſs, and ſomething of humour, added to great ſagacity and experience in the world, he liſtened to his converſation with much complaiſance. Ferret, upon his part, appeared not diſpleaſed with Peregrine.

To divert his mind from bitter reflections upon his preſent condition, Peregrine accuſtomed himſelf to walk in the yards of the priſon, in the ſociety of Ferret. In one of theſe converſations Peregrine had lamented the hardſhips to which thoſe were expoſed who, in the common phraſe, had their own fortunes to make.

"The way is ſmooth," ſaid he, "and eaſy to be trod to thoſe who, born with a ſufficiency for their ſupport, have a deſire

to

to improve their ſufficiency to affluence.—Money begets money, and little ingenuity is wanting to improve a capital."

"I do not agree with you here," replied Ferret. "Some kind of capital indeed is neceſſary; but, in my opinion, that of wit is ſufficient—I had almoſt ſaid preferable to the other: for the one may be aliened, but the other is out of the reach of Fortune.—For my own part, Sir, I began life with nothing; and few, I believe, have ſeen more of its ſplendours, or partaken more of its ſweets. I am worth but little at this preſent moment; but I do not deſpair that I ſhall again emerge—that I ſhall again break from my cloud, and regain my former ſphere."

"You are an extraordinary man," ſaid Peregrine; "I ſhould wiſh to hear the foundation of this confidence."

"Experience," replied Ferret, "is my foundation;—nor will you be surprised at my confidence when you hear the events of my life. I will now relate them to you, and with more candour than you may perhaps expect. Hypocrisy is only the vice of cowards;—I fear no one, and therefore shall conceal but little."

Ferret here began his narrative, and continued it with so much candour, that Peregrine regarded him with astonishment, as one of the most complete rogues, and indeed confessing himself to be one, in the kingdom. He at length proceeded to his flight from Chester, and his settlement in a distant village as an apothecary.

Peregrine here regarded him with a look of incredulity.

"Nay," continued he, "the village is not

not very diſtant from town: the name of it is L———."

The features of Peregrine were now fixed in aſtoniſhment upon the face of the ſpeaker; he had ſometimes thought that he remembered him, and this mention of his native place now recalled every thing to his memory, and he repeated the name of Mintwell.

"Yes!" exclaimed the aſtoniſhed Ferret, "I aſſumed the name of Mintwell. But how came you to know this circumſtance?"

"You were ſurgeon to my uncle," replied Peregrine, "who lived in the ſame village."

"Surgeon to your uncle!" repeated Ferret. "What is your name?"

"Peregrine is the only name by which I have ever been known," replied Peregrine; "but my uncle's name was Dr. Dry."

Peregrine

Peregrine had no ſooner uttered theſe words, than Ferret ſtarted ſome paces backward; and then ruſhing again forwards, and ſeizing Peregrine by the ſhoulders, examined with eagerneſs the features of his face.

"Yes, by Heaven," exclaimed he, "you are the ſame!—Heaven be thanked that revenge is ſtill in my power!—Heaven be thanked that my efforts will not be impotent!"

Peregrine, in aſtoniſhment, endeavoured to diſcover the meaning of theſe exclamations; but Ferret paid no attention to his enquiries, continuing to repeat ſuch queſtions as ſuited his own purpoſe, and all of which were equally unintelligible to Peregrine.

In the moment in which Peregrine was in ſome hopes that his curioſity would be gratified, Ferret was ſummoned to the Marſhal

of

of the priſon. Upon leaving him, however, Ferret thus addreſſed him—

" Keep your cheerfulneſs;—you are perhaps nearer to your happineſs than you expect."

It was in vain that Peregrine endeavoured to conjecture the meaning of any thing that had paſſed. He remembered, indeed, that Ferret, in his aſſumed character of an apothecary, had been a frequent viſitor in the family of his uncle, and, as he believed, his attendant ſurgeon during his laſt illneſs; but nothing could be inferred from this. Nor did Ferret himſelf appear inclined to enter into any ſatisfactory explanation. He was compelled therefore to wait to a further period a more ample diſcovery.

A ſervant in livery (ſuch things are) now put a card into his hand, upon the examination

tion of which, he found it to contain the following words:—

" At home.

" Monday, ſix o'clock."

Peregrine had lived ſo little in the world of faſhion, that had he received the ſame card even in his apartments at Sir Rupert's, he would have been equally at a loſs for its meaning; upon receiving it in a priſon, he could return no other reply than a ſtare at the bearer. The ſervant however departed without the addition of a word, and Peregrine was ſtill involved in aſtoniſhment; when he was

was addreſſed by the ſtranger who, upon his firſt arrival in the priſon, had ſet him upon his guard againſt Ferret. They had walked and converſed together ſeveral times ſince that occurrence; Peregrine therefore put into his hand the card he had received.

"You muſt not wonder at this," replied the ſtranger, gueſſing the motive of this act of Peregrine. "The Fleet is no imperfect repreſentation of the great world beyond its walls: it contains the ſame variety of conditions, the ſame claſſes, and the ſame purſuits. There are in this place, as in the world beyond our walls, a claſs of rich and a claſs of poor; a claſs of people of faſhion, and a herd of the canaille. There is not indeed ſo much difference, ſo great a diſtance between the different claſſes; for as the numbers of the higher claſs are not of a high amount, to fill their parties the faſhionables of the Fleet are com[illegible]elled

compelled to diſpenſe with ſome of the eſtabliſhed forms of the *bon ton*, and to invite thoſe to whom they have not had the honour of any previous introduction—in a word, perfect ſtrangers. Such is the invitation you have received for this evening. You are invited to the rout of one of the faſhionables of the Fleet. The novelty of the ſpectacle, to you at leaſt, will repay you for the loſs of time. I can promiſe you that you will have every thing according to the eſtabliſhed rules of the mode: the perſon who gives the entertainment is a man of fortune; and ſo far is his fortune from being impaired by his impriſonment, that his only purpoſe in entering the Fleet was to preſerve his eſtate. One-third of his annual income might have diſcharged his debt; but he has choſen to refuſe that third, and to enter the Fleet."

"The

" The debt was an unfair one, I ſuppoſe," ſaid Peregrine.

" Not at all," replied the other. " It was due to an honeſt butcher for value received; and the creditor himſelf, by the loſs of the money, is ſo abſolutely ruined, that he will perhaps ſucceed to his debtor's place in this ſame priſon. 'Tis a pity indeed that ſuch things ſhould be; but as the law is too ſevere upon the perſons of debtors, it is perhaps only juſt that it ſhould be too lenient upon their property. There are many at this very moment within the walls of this priſon, who continue the ſame luxury and the ſame riot as whilſt they remained upon the town, and expend in this profuſion an annual income, which would more than thrice ſuffice to pay their original debt. Such things are.—I would adviſe you, however, to attend this rout;—the miſtreſs of the gentleman preſides. I can

I can predict that every thing will be to your satisfaction. I am myself amongst the invited."

Peregrine upon this retired to dress; and at the appointed hour, accompanied by the stranger, attended the apartments in which the entertainment was prepared. He found that the representations of the stranger had not deceived him; for every thing more than corresponded with what he had described: every thing, in a word, was splendour, luxury, and profusion. A lady in the most fashionable dress, *tout a fait à la mode*, received the visitors. The most expensive refreshments, and those in the greatest profusion, were prepared for their entertainment. The gentleman himself returned the salute of the visitors with the most courtly address: in a word, every thing bore the character of fashionable affluence.

"What

"What think you now?" ſaid the ſtranger to Peregrine, upon obſerving the ſurpriſe which was ſo viſibly impreſſed upon the features of his face.

"I think," replied Peregrine, "that the entertainment does more credit to the taſte than to the honeſty of the giver. The coſt of his rout might ſave his butcher from ruin."

"You are right with regard to the morality of the thing," replied the ſtranger; "but wrong with regard to what predominates over the morality—the faſhion, or in other words, *la belle mode*. According to this latter code, the butcher is a vulgar dog, a greaſy hound, and ſufficiently honoured by the employ of a man of faſhion. The fellow ſhould have waited the gentleman's convenience for his money, and as he has thought proper to turn reſtive, to prove ſturdy, the gentleman

gentleman has ſhewn a very proper ſpirit in being as ſturdy as him, and in preferring a priſon to giving forced ſatisfaction to ſuch a fellow as the butcher. Such is the language, the morality, and the practice of the *belle mode*."

The attention of Peregrine was here called off by the hurry of the company towards the card-tables; ſeveral were now placed, and the rout had nothing different, either in ſplendour or extravagance, from what are nightly exhibited at the weſt end of the town. Peregrine, who had formed other ideas of a priſon, could ſcarcely repreſs his aſtoniſhment: the bets ran high, and the ſtakes were ſtill higher. By what appeared upon the tables, and was transferred from one to another, a ſpectator would have been led to conclude that it was rather a commercial houſe, than a priſon of debtors.

" Is

"Is it poſſible," ſaid Peregrine, "that the laws can overlook—can permit the exiſtence of this continued diſhoneſty?—Can they thus permit them to laviſh the property of their creditors (for ſuch is that of every debtor), to ſupport the ſame profligacy even within the walls of their gaol?—This ought not to be, if laws can reach it."

"Your ſurpriſe," ſaid the ſtranger, "would be ſtill greater, if you knew the private hiſtory of half of theſe higher claſs of debtors. It is only upon the poorer wretches that the law preſſes with ſeverity. The higher claſs of debtors meaſure their dignity by the extent of diſhoneſty; and a perſon of this claſs is actually more or leſs reſpected, according as his debt is greater or leſs. The preſident of the debtors, our hoſt, owes his influence and reputation in the priſon to the thouſands in which he is indebted;—he was hard puſhed

to-day to prove his claim to this ſuperiority. The gentleman upon his right-hand boaſted that his debt was not leſs than ten thouſand pounds; our hoſt, however, proved that he owed upwards of twelve, and thus was confirmed in the pre-eminence which he has enjoyed from his arrival amongſt us."

Peregrine's eyes were now attracted to a man of an unuſual ſourneſs of aſpect; he had a pertneſs of addreſs, however, which was the more ludicrous, as being ſo ill ſuited to the general caſt of his features. Peregrine could ſcarcely repreſs a ſmile as he regarded this ridiculous mixture of foppery and auſterity; the ſtranger, his friend, obſerved it, and upon enquiry, and ſatisfaction with regard to its cauſe, added—

"Your ridicule of this perſonage is more juſt than you perhaps imagine: he is not only a compoſition of every folly which is a juſt ſubject

ſubject of ridicule; but he has nothing of that good-humour, that benevolence of heart or mind which not unfrequently accompany folly, and, by the tenderneſs which they excite, redeem it from the laſh. He was once a character of ſome celebrity—the editor of a faſhionable newſpaper, and a man of acknowledged talents. He ſpared no coſt, either of induſtry or fineſſe, to eſtabliſh the credit of his paper; and ſome of his means were ſo ſingular, that I cannot forbear their mention.—Thus he had the ingenuity to perceive that the town might be divided into two ſpecies of readers—the faſhionable, and the political. The latter could only be pleaſed by the relation, or at leaſt ſuggeſtion of wars, battles, treaties, alliances. The more numerous claſs, that of the faſhionables, had other objects of their deſire: an intrigue was more dear to them than a treaty; and the firſt hint

of a *crim. con.* a probable duel, or a family diſpute upon the conduct of any of its female members, were of more worth in their eyes than all the more important affairs of all the Courts of Europe. Upon this baſis, therefore, our editor reſolved to build his fortune. His means were to take a very large and expenſive houſe—to obtain upon credit, and by the intereſt and aſſiſtance of a perſon who knew his talents, an elegant equipage. By theſe methods he ſoon obtained the neceſſary introduction into moſt of the faſhionable ſocieties in the town; and as he poſſeſſed a good addreſs, and a perfect dexterity of flattery, he had no difficulty, after having once gained, to maintain his ſituation. He thus obtained a full knowledge of all the ſubject matter of his intended paper—ſaw the commencement of every intrigue, and marked the progreſs of every amour; and, as his views

views were all directed to this one point, discovered what escaped every eye but his own. In his paper, upon the following morning, he would thus usher to the world—'It is confidently stated in the upper circles, that Colonel Prodigal is shortly to be honoured with the fair hand of Miss Lavish.'—The parties, as you may well conjecture, could only stare upon the perusal of this paragraph; and when pressed by their acquaintance, denied it with the most assured confidence. The event, however, seldom failed to justify the prediction of the ingenious editor, and thus fully established the fashionable authenticity of his paper."

The party were now summoned to the supper apartments, and took their seats at the tables. A lady presided. Peregrine demanded her name.

" She is the *chere amie*, or, in plain Engliſh, the kept-miſtreſs of our hoſt. She is not without many good qualities; and one will excite your ſurpriſe. The gentleman, upon their firſt connection, had made her a ſettlement of five hundred *per annum*; you may gueſs his ſurpriſe therefore when, although he knew her to have no propenſity to extravagance, he always found her without money. He was ſome time before he diſcovered the cauſe of this ſingular circumſtance; an incident, however, at length explained it. The maid, whom he had employed as a ſpy upon her miſtreſs, put a letter one day into his hand, upon the opening of which, the contents appeared to be a remittance of two hundred pounds, which ſhe had received from himſelf the ſame morning. In an emotion of jealouſy he haſtily examined the addreſs: conceive his aſtoniſhment when he found

found it to be addreſſed to his own wife!—He had compelled this lady, upon a very moderate allowance, to accept of articles of ſeparation; and as he paid even this ſtipend, narrow as it was, in the ſame manner as all his other debts, ſhe was thus reduced to the greateſt diſtreſs. His generous miſtreſs happened to arrive at the knowledge of this circumſtance, and thus contrived, without the knowledge of the lady, to ſupply her wants."

"She deſerves a ſtatue!" ſaid Peregrine.

"Have a care that no lady of virtue hear you," replied the ſtranger.

The party now broke up, and each retired, without coaches indeed, to their own apartments.—Such things are!—Such is the miſery of our priſons!

CHAP. X.

UPON the following morning, Peregrine was ſcarcely ſeated at his breakfaſt-table when he was told that a gentleman deſired to ſee him. In a few minutes old Method walked into his apartment. The blood of Peregrine fled back from his heart as he ſaw him enter: he remembered the letter he had ſent him, containing a full reſignation of Cecilia, and conjectured that he was now come to conclude this affair. We have already deſcribed the ſtate of the feelings of Peregrine upon this ſubject—the momentary generoſity and enthuſiaſm

enthuſiaſm which had induced him to this ſacrifice, and his return to thoſe more natural ſentiments of love which cauſed ſo bitter a repentance of what he had done. This viſit of old Method recalled the bitterneſs of theſe feelings; nor was this the only ſentiment to which this viſit, rather too abrupt, gave riſe. Peregrine could not but feel ſomething like ſhame, when he reflected upon the condition in which he was ſeen: his dreſs, that of deſpair, was ſlovenly; his apartment was mean, and even that apartment not excluſively his own.

Old Method, with the honeſt good-humour of his claſs, that of an Engliſh merchant, addreſſed him with his uſual familiarity; and, perceiving his features to wear the impreſſion of ſhame, endeavoured to relieve him from this uneaſineſs by a raillery upon his condition.

" Never droop, my boy!" ſaid the old gentleman; " a priſon for debt has been the lot of many a good man.—Beſides, your releaſe may be nearer than you expect. I have come to make a propoſal to you;—accept it, and I will diſcharge your debt. You know I am a man of buſineſs, and accuſtomed to pay well for any benefit received."

The old gentleman proceeded; and, according to the conjecture of Peregrine, propoſed the ſurrender of his daughter, and his conſent to her immediate union with Myrtle.

" Upon theſe terms, young man, you ſhall take leave of your priſon to morrow."

Peregrine, as we have related, expected this propoſal; one thing, however, excited his ſurpriſe: the old gentleman had made no mention whatever of having received the letter which Peregrine had written to him,

him, and which had contained the full ſurrender demanded.

It would have been indeed a ſubject of greater aſtoniſhment, had he made the ſlighteſt mention of what never arrived to his knowledge. The letters of Peregrine to Cecilia and her father had been thrown into the fire by the porter, for the ſake of the twopence poſtage, which this honeſt gentleman thought fit to convey into his own pocket; another ſingularity in the conduct of our priſons, moſt of the officers of which are better deſerving of puniſhment than their priſoners themſelves. But this is nothing to our purpoſe.

Old Method continued to enforce his propoſal by thoſe arguments which were to the purpoſe, or to his own capacity; but as the ſubſtance of them had already paſſed through the mind of Peregrine, and indeed inſpired

him with the reſolution we have related, we ſhall not trouble ourſelves to repeat them.

The old gentleman now departed, with a promiſe that he would repeat his viſit upon the following day, and would bring with him the money for his releaſe; not doubting that he would accept a propoſal ſo much to his advantage.

The emotions of Peregrine, and his real grief of mind, had preſerved him almoſt in total ſilence during this viſit: he had indeed no intention to refuſe the ſacrifice which was demanded; for beſides that he conſidered it as incumbent upon his generoſity, as he knew nothing with regard to the miſcarriage, or rather non-carriage of the letters he had ſent, he conſidered it as already made. Nor could he underſtand the ſilence of old Method upon this point. The heart of Peregrine, however, felt as if relieved from a burthen upon

the departure of old Method; the truth was, that his love for Cecilia ſtill continued—was, perhaps, further augmented by the difficulties which ſurrounded him; and that, however neceſſary to the happineſs both of himſelf and miſtreſs, this ſacrifice appeared—however impoſſible any union, he was yet unwilling to put a period to a love which had ſo long been the only ſolace of his life.

For ſome hours after the departure of Method, Peregrine remained abſtracted from every thing about him, and indulging one of thoſe gloomy reveries, which are the moſt dangerous moments to the miſerable. Upon whichever ſide he looked, he ſaw nothing around him but deſpair. A life of joyleſs labour was even neceſſary to his ſupport. He could only eſcape from his preſent confinement by a ſurrender of the object to which he had hitherto looked for happineſs. In a word,

word, he now awoke to a full ſenſe of the miſery of his ſituation; the ſpring of his mind was relaxed by his confinement, and had he not poſſeſſed an unuſual fortitude and a religious confidence, he could not have withheld his propenſity to put a period in the ſame moment to his miſery and his exiſtence. Such at this moment was the gloomy ſtate of his mind.

Indeed nothing could be more hopeleſs than his preſent condition. His purſe had been daily diminiſhing, and he was now literally reduced to the laſt ſhilling. The ſtranger who had ſhewed him many civilities, had added that of recommending him to a printer, who made it his boaſt that he had publiſhed more treaſonable pamphlets and more libels, with more perfect impunity, than any other of his profeſſion. The printer, having a leiſure hour, condeſcended to pay Peregrine a

viſit,

viſit, and he was aroufed from his reverie by his entrance. Thinking the perſon he was viſiting to be an author—that is to ſay, one of his workmen and dependants, he ſeated himſelf without invitation, and demanded of Peregrine if he had any thing as yet ready for his hands.

" What would you wiſh?" ſaid Peregrine. " Chuſe for yourſelf."

" If that is the caſe," replied the printer, " we ſhall ſoon agree. Suppoſe we abuſe the Miniſter;—'tis a popular ſubject, and will go off briſkly in the city."

" He has done nothing meriting abuſe," ſaid Peregrine.

" He has done nothing to merit abuſe!" repeated the printer; " what is that to us? The pamphlet will ſell; and that is all we require. Are we to write for his advantage,

or

or our own?—A Miniſter is always fair game; and, as he is ſeated upon an eminence, is ſo eaſy a ſhot, that any blunderer may hit him. There is no fear of want of matter. Either the taxes are too great, or very ill placed. Only remember one thing—don't ſpare him; and, my word for it, we ſhall ſell at leaſt one impreſſion."

"Suppoſe I ſhould write a ſatire," ſaid Peregrine; "I have ſomething of a knack that way. And every thing around me will furniſh matter."

"Well then let it be a ſatire," replied the printer; "but remember, you muſt only laſh the great. No one has any curioſity with regard to any others. None, for example, would go to ſee a common fellow hanged; but let one of our Noblemen be tucked up, and he will have the town to ſee his exit.—

Yes,

Yes, let it be a ſatire; and remember to hang none upon its gibbet but the greateſt and beſt men of the day."

"But what ſay you to a public character?" ſaid Peregrine.

"A good thought!" repeated the printer, "a very good thought! Public characters never took better. There are many of our public characters have enriched the bookſellers more than themſelves; and, to ſpeak the truth, have never been worth a ſixpence to any other part of their country but the bookſellers.—Yes, let it be a public character. Yes, yes, nothing is more likely to anſwer our purpoſe."

"But what ſhall I do for materials?" ſaid Peregrine. "I know none of the great."

"Materials for a public character!" rejoined the other; "who ever heard of ſuch a thing!

a thing!—You know none of the great!—I believe you; for how ſhould an author know any thing of the great?—No, no, public characters are not compoſed in this manner. They may be written as well by a man who has lived in priſon all his life, as by any other; and one of my beſt writers, poor fellow! is now on board the hulks in the river. You have only to take a Hiſtory of England, a red book, and a Parliamentary Regiſter. The red book gives you the date of his birth; and as to his youth, why it is like the youth of other men.—'Our ſubject,' you may ſay, 'gave an early promiſe of his preſent maturity of perfections: his learning, his taſte, and his talents were very early the ſubject of the admiration of his friends,' &c. &c. &c.—The Parliamentary Regiſter gives you his ſpeeches; and the hiſtory of the

the preſent reign, the occaſions upon which they are ſpoken.—Such is the uſual compoſition of a public character."

Peregrine was ſomewhat ſurpriſed at this artificial biography, this trade of book-making.

The printer now took his leave, ſaying that he heard other viſitors upon the ſtairs, which was indeed the truth; for he had ſcarcely left the apartment when L—— entered. In the pleaſure of this meeting, Peregrine forgot the long abſence of his friend; but the firſt expreſſions of ſatisfaction being over, L—— thought it neceſſary to enter into ſome explanation of his abſence. To this purpoſe he put a letter into his hands: Peregrine immediately recogniſed it to be the writing of his Cecilia, and perceived it to be addreſſed to L——. Its contents were as follow:—

"SIR,

" SIR,

" I intended myſelf the pleaſure of ſeeing you this afternoon, agreeable to appointment, and upon the ſubject of the calamity of ourmutual friend. I need not ſay that I have an intereſt yet ſtronger than that of friendſhip, in his immediate releaſe. The ſeaſon of the misfortune of our friends, is not that of reſerve upon the part of thoſe from whom they have the ſtrongeſt claim of aſſiſtance. I do not therefore heſitate to confeſs that my very happineſs depends upon the immediate releaſe of your friend. I have no other fortune but five hundred pounds, which has been left to me by my deceaſed mother. I have ſent you a copy of the will, and other papers upon this ſubject;—you may, perhaps,

haps, ſucceed in raiſing the neceſſary ſum of money upon theſe documents. I am now within three months of legal age;—I hope this ſhort interval will prove no impediment to your ſucceſs. I again repeat, my happineſs depends upon it.

"Your's, &c.

"CECILIA."

Peregrine followed the peruſal of this letter by many exclamations of gratitude, love, and admiration. L—— proceeded to relate that he had been unwilling to pay him a viſit in his priſon, until he could be the bearer of his releaſe. For this purpoſe he had been labouring, but until the preceding day, in vain. He had at length, however, ſucceeded; and a perſon was willing to advance the neceſſary

neceſſary ſum upon the bond of Cecilia, further ſecured, however, by the obligation of L——.

" So that now," ſaid L——, " I can congratulate you upon your releaſe."

" Indeed you cannot," ſaid Peregrine. " If my releaſe can only be procured by the ſacrifice of the ſlender portion of my Cecilia, may I continue the priſoner of my unrelenting creditors till doomſday!—No, my friend, Cecilia ſhall not be more generous than myſelf: if ſhe has generoſity enough to offer me her all, I am not baſe enough to accept it.—Beſides, how would my ſituation be improved by a releaſe like that?—I ſhould ruin Cecilia, and ſubject her, by the deprivation of her ſlender portion, to the tyranny of her artful ſtepmother, without improving my own condition. I ſhall be deſtitute in the ſtreets.—No, my friend, this will not do."

" I have

"I have already anticipated your anſwer," replied L——; "for I had no ſooner obtained the conſent of the lender to pay the money upon the ſpot, than I reflected that you might not be equally willing to accept it. I have refuſed his offer therefore;—but what remains to be done?"

"I know not," replied Peregrine. "The father of my Cecilia has been with me a few hours ſince."

Peregrine here related the propoſal he had made. L—— urged him to the acceptance. Peregrine combatted theſe perſuaſions with his uſual arguments; and finally declared that, though he could no longer heſitate to reſign Cecilia, he would do it of his own free-will, and would accept of no ſuch terms.

As

As it was now late, L—— withdrew; but promiſed to call upon him the following morning. Peregrine, with a heavy heart, retired to his bed.

CHAP. XI.

The Proſpects of the Hero begin to brighten.

IT was in vain that Peregrine endeavoured to gain any repoſe during the night. The ſenſe of his misfortunes preſſed with more weight

weight upon him than at any other moment during his impriſonment. The criſis was now at hand. His money was reduced to the laſt ſhilling ;—upon the following day he muſt ſacrifice his miſtreſs ; and though a propoſal for his releaſe would be made, he was bound in honour not to accept it. In a word, it was only to the return of Haſtings that he muſt look for his liberty, and he knew not whether his return might not be at a great diſtance. It muſt be confeſſed that Fortune had not hitherto ſpared our hero: he was now ſunk to the very loweſt ſpoke of her wheel, and nothing but a thorough revolution could again exalt him. This, however, now approached.

Wearied, diſheartened, and diſpirited, Peregrine aroſe in the morning, and, in a ſtate of mind which even a fallen ſpirit might pity, ſat down to a meagre breakfaſt. He

expected every minute the arrival of L——, and old Method; but hours passed away, and neither came. With the peevishness which usually attends misery, he was about to break out into some reproaches upon the cruelty of L——, when he recalled to his mind that he had no claims upon his constant attendance, and that his impatience could serve no end but to imbitter his sufferings.

To divert his thoughts, if possible, from the incessant contemplation of his forlorn condition, he descended into the tennis-court, another luxury which is not denied to the higher class of debtors. He was here joined by Ferret, whom he had not seen the preceding day. Ferret entered into an immediate conversation with him; and in the course of it, regarded him with so much earnestness, and addressed him with so much complacency,

complacency, that he excited in no ſmall degree the aſtoniſhment of Peregrine.

How natural to man is ſociety! How irreſiſtible are its charms! Peregrine knew Ferret to be a ſcoundrel, to whoſe merits the gallows would ſcarcely have been equal; yet ſo wholly did he forget this circumſtance, that he liſtened to him with the greateſt complacency, and found his gaiety return by the freedom of their mutual intercourſe.

Ferret, as we have before related, did not want addreſs; his knowledge of the world had given him an eaſy and aſſured manner, and he wanted nothing but honeſty, or a better appearance of it, to form a moſt agreeable companion. Of honeſty, however, Ferret had ſo little notion, that he did not think it worth the coſt of diſſimulation.—His villany indeed had ſomething of a

character peculiar to itſelf—there was a candour in it which rendered it leſs odious.

Ferret invited Peregrine to take a part in one of the games; money however was neceſſary for this, and Peregrine was now abſolutely pennileſs. He was ſomewhat aſhamed to confeſs this ſtate of his pocket, and endeavoured to decline the propoſal upon other excuſes. Ferret, however, gueſſed the real ſtate of the caſe, and pulling out a well-loaded purſe, offered it to Peregrine. The latter could only reply by a ſtare of aſtoniſhment.

"This is neither a place nor a time for delicacy," ſaid Ferret; "and perhaps you may have more right to this purſe, and every other benefit I can confer, than you at preſent think."

Peregrine however continued to reject the offer with as much warmth as Ferret continued to

to preſs it; he conſented at length to take a part in a propoſed game of tennis, and thus continued to divert himſelf till Ferret was ſummoned away by a viſitor. Ferret again endeavoured to preſs his purſe upon Peregrine; the latter again rejected it, and at length with ſomething of aſperity. Seeing his efforts in vain, Ferret retired; but promiſed to return as ſoon as he had diſmiſſed his viſitor.

It was in vain that Peregrine endeavoured to comprehend the words, and to draw any concluſion from the ſingular manner of Ferret. The more he indulged his reflections, the deeper did he find himſelf immerged in difficulty. There was doubtleſs ſomething of unuſual myſtery, but the moment had not arrived for its full development.

Upon returning to his apartments he found L—— and old Method, who had arrived

during his abſence, and awaited his return. After the firſt ſalutes, Method entered upon the ſubject of his viſit; and, preſenting a paper for his ſignature, demanded his anſwer.

" It is this," replied Peregrine, " that I will not ſell my conſent to make this ſacrifice."

Old Method replied to this by an abrupt demand whether he was reſolved to continue in priſon; adding, that he had no claim upon him, unleſs he merited it by ſuch a compliance with his will.

Peregrine acknowledged the truth of this; adding, that he expected nothing of the kind, and was reſolved to wait in ſubmiſſion the return of Haſtings.

" And this is your anſwer, young man?" ſaid Method.

" It is my anſwer," replied Peregrine.

" Then

" Then you will not ſurrender your pretended claim to my daughter?" ſaid Method.

" I did not ſay that," reſumed Peregrine. " I ſaid that I would not ſell my conſent—in other words, that I would not admit myſelf to be purchaſed to a diſcharge of a duty. Were there any means by which I could ſupport myſelf and my Cecilia, even at the expence of a life of the moſt painful labour, in the common decencies of our ſtation, no proffer of any ſuperior ſplendour ſhould withdraw me from the effort; but as I am now worſe than deſtitute, I will not involve her in any participation of my miſery. I conſent, therefore, to releaſe her from her engagements; and ſhall ſolicit her to comply in every reſpect with the wiſhes of her father.—This, Sir, is my full anſwer."

"And a noble one it is, young man!" ſaid Method. "But you ſhall loſe nothing by your honour, and from this moment you may conſider yourſelf as free. I ſhall pay the debt myſelf; for this is the leaſt I can do."

"No, Sir," replied Peregrine, "you ſhall not pay the debt. You have juſtly obſerved that I have no claim upon you whatever;—you muſt pardon me if I cannot accept your proffer. My ſacrifice at preſent can be imputed to no mean motives of profit. When your daughter ſhall hear of it, ſhe will conſider it as an additional proof of my love —of my unwillingneſs to involve her in my misfortunes. But ſhould I accept your offer, it would have a leſs unſuſpicious appearance —the ſurrender might be imputed to the gratuity."

They

They were here interrupted by the hurried and abrupt entrance of Ferret, the door of the apartment being forced open, and every appearance of emotion in his looks. He did not wait for any enquiry, but abruptly addreſſed himſelf to Peregrine.

"I told you, Sir, that the moment was near when your fortune was about to experience a change;—that moment is now arrived, and I am about to explain every thing. I have but a minute, however, for this purpoſe. I ſhall ſoon be in the hands of Juſtice!"

Peregrine, L——, and Method, all in equal aſtoniſhment, requeſted him to proceed.

"I have related the former part of my life," continued Ferret, "and you are acquainted with every thing which has occurred to me, till my arrival in L———, the

village in which your uncle reſided. My profeſſion, that of an apothecary, introduced me to his family; and during the whole of his laſt illneſs, I was never abſent from his houſe. You may remember that you were at Oxford during the whole of that time; and that, though you knew of his illneſs, you were prevented from coming to L——— by a letter, which contained not only a ſtrict prohibition upon this point, but was written in a ſtyle of language no leſs ſevere than unjuſt."

"I remember it," ſaid Peregrine; "nor ever ſhall I forget the pain it cauſed me.—My ſurpriſe was little leſs than my regret: his former letters were in the tone of paternal affection. My conduct had nothing culpable. I knew not to what to impute this extraordinary deviation."

"I ſhould have wondered if you had known," continued Ferret. "But to put a period

period to your ſuſpenſe upon the cauſe of this change in the manner of your uncle, the letter, in one word, was not his own—the letter was written by myſelf!"

Peregrine ſtarted with aſtoniſhment; but Ferret thus continued—

"I do not wonder at your ſurpriſe;—the forgery was one of the moſt maſterly of my practices—I always excelled in the imitation of hand-writing. But perhaps you are equally at a loſs with regard to the purpoſe of this forgery. It was, in one word, for no other purpoſe than that of cheating you of a fortune, to which you would otherwiſe have been heir; and in this it has hitherto ſucceeded.

"In the neighbourhood of your patron lived a lawyer, of the name of Latitat, his elder nephew; though, from his abandoned practices, never acknowledged as ſuch.—

The character of Latitat, to expreſs it in a word, was little inferior in the point of ingenuity, and knowledge of his profeſſion, to my own. We thus became confidential friends, and I concealed from him nothing of my former life. In return, he was in the habit of lamenting, in my preſence, the reſerve which exiſted upon the part of his uncle; and inſtead of imputing this reſerve to the right cauſe—that of his infamous practices, he attributed it to the affection which he had conceived for yourſelf. It was at this period that your uncle was ſeized with his laſt illneſs, and I was called upon, in my aſſumed character of an apothecary, to attend him. Latitat no ſooner heard of the illneſs of his uncle, than his hatred to you, and his complaints to me upon the probable reverſion of the fortune to you inſtead of himſelf, were reſumed. And when your

patron

patron at length preſented me with a ſealed will, adding in the ſame moment in which he put it into my hands, that he had bequeathed every thing, with the exception of a few legacies, to you; it is impoſſible to deſcribe the language of rage and diſappointment with which Latitat received this information.

" Unfortunately for yourſelf, you happened to be abſent at this time. This circumſtance inſpired me with a purpoſe which, fatally for you, has fully ſucceeded. In one of our nightly meetings, when the complaints of Latitat, and his fury againſt you, broke out with more than uſual vehemence, ſomething entered into my mind, and I demanded of Latitat what he would give to be ſecured in the poſſeſſion of his uncle's inheritance.—Latitat replied only by a look of aſtoniſhment;

ment; not as yet, perhaps, sufficiently comprehending what I intended.

'But for the will,' said I, 'you would be the heir, as his *elder* nephew.'

'Yes,' replied he, 'were it not for the will, which gives every thing to that c——d b——d.'

'But that will,' resumed I, 'is in my own hands.'

"I had no sooner uttered these words, than Latitat comprehended my full meaning, and with eagerness seconded the proposal.—In a word, I delivered the will into his hands for destruction, and with this delivery confirmed to him the inheritance. He consented to assign me a liberal share.

"Our next purpose was to keep you at a distance, that you might learn nothing of the intention of your patron. To effect this, I forged the letter which you received, and thus

thus detained you in your college till the death of your patron.

" Upon the event of this death, Latitat, as heir at law, took poſſeſſion of the eſtates of the Doctor; and as your patron had held large preferment, and inherited in the latter part of his life all the amaſſed wealth of an avaricious father, Latitat found himſelf in poſſeſſion of one of the beſt eſtates, and largeſt perſonal property in the county.—One-third of it, however, he agreed to pay to me; and from the death of your patron, till the commencement of the preſent year, has fulfilled this condition. He has at length thought proper to withhold this performance: upon what confidence he has ventured upon this raſhneſs I know not; but my letters have all remained unanſwered, and I have received nothing. I will not take any falſe merit to myſelf:—had he paid me my third, and remained faithful

faithful to me, I ſhould have remained equally faithful to him; but as he has preferred to break our compact, I have reſolved to anticipate him in any confeſſion he may intend to make."

Ferret was here interrupted by the entrance of ſome conſtables, who took him into immediate cuſtody upon a warrant of felony. L—— having enquired of one of them the nature of his buſineſs, the fellow put into his hands a letter, the contents of which were as follow:—

" SIR,

" If you have a proper regard for the performance of your duty, upon the receipt of this letter you will iſſue a warrant of felony againſt the writer. I confeſs myſelf

myſelf to be a felon!—and to have aſſiſted in the deſtruction of a will, by which a young man, now living, is defrauded of immenſe property.—The companion of my guilt is of the name of Latitat, now reſident in L———, in the county of Middleſex, againſt whom it is equally neceſſary to iſſue the ſame warrant. I am prepared, at the proper time and place, to anſwer to every queſtion, and give evidence to conviction.

" I am, Sir, your's, &c.

" J. FERRET.

" N. B. I am to be found in No. 7, Southern Chambers of the Fleet Priſon."

The officers now departed with their priſoner, leaving Peregrine, L——, and Method fixed to the ſpot in aſtoniſhment. It

was

was some time before they had sufficiently recovered themselves to consider what was to be done: it was then agreed that L—— should attend the prisoner to the sitting magistrate, and take the necessary minutes of his examination. Method, with great frankness, promised to engage counsel.

"Though I fear," said he, "that should we hang the wretches, it will be of little service to you. If the will is destroyed, you can have no claim as heir."

Peregrine assented to this observation; and again reproached the peculiarity of his fortune, which, as if delighting in this kind of mockery, thus held out a promise of approaching good, which only terminated in disappointment.

"Come, come," said Method, "no more of this at present;—you shall dine with me, and we'll talk over what is to be done."

Saying

Saying this, he took hold of his arm, and Peregrine was following him, when the latter ſuddenly recollected, and reminded Method that he was a priſoner.

"No ſuch thing," ſaid the old gentleman; "I am not leſs honourable than yourſelf. It is true that I wiſhed you to ſurrender your pretenſions to my daughter, and that I employed the promiſe of the payment of your debt as the condition of this ſacrifice. The debt, however, was paid as ſoon as I entered the priſon; though I did not think it neceſſary to tell you ſo.—Come, no ſcruples," continued he, ſeeing Peregrine about to make ſome objections; "if the obligation lies heavy upon you, we will conſider how you may repay it."

Peregrine ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded, and they left the priſon together.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The History draws near a Conclusion.

AS the morning was not yet far advanced, and they had therefore much time upon their hands, upon the proposal of L——, they all departed in company to the sitting magistrate. The examination of Ferret differed nothing in substance from what he had already avowed; he added, however, that no time should be lost to arrest Latitat, before he should hear of the apprehension of his accomplice.

" The

" The will," ſaid he, " is perhaps yet undeſtroyed. Latitat, from his natural precaution, may have preſerved it, to guard againſt any thing upon my part. If this be the caſe, a ſudden apprehenſion may be the means of its reattainment.—I would adviſe," continued he, " that ſome one might attend with the officers, who may avail himſelf of any incident of this kind."

Upon this propoſal, Peregrine was about to offer himſelf upon this commiſſion; but Ferret added, that as Peregrine was known to Latitat, and might be ſeen by him before he obtained entrance into his houſe, it would be better if any other perſon ſhould be ſent. Upon this L—— propoſed himſelf; and the meeting, with the approbation of the magiſtrate, departed, without any further delay, with the officers.

Ferret

Ferret was committed; but received a promiſe that he ſhould be admitted as evidence againſt his partner in guilt. Peregrine, entering into a proper recogniſance to proſecute, was at length permitted to withdraw.

Method began to conceive the moſt lively hopes that the condition of Peregrine was upon the point of amendment, and addreſſed Peregrine in a tone of more than uſual complacency.

"You have, perhaps, given your miſtreſs up too ſoon," ſaid he. "I have told you, ſince I firſt knew you, that if you can produce a proper fortune, my daughter is your's. I ſhall prefer you before any other of double your fortune, if that fortune be ſufficient. I know not how your preſent views may turn out;—you have my beſt wiſhes, and my daughter

daughter ſhall wait the event. If you are the Doctor's heir, you ſhall be my ſon."

Peregrine himſelf felt more ſanguine than at any other period of his life; he almoſt flattered himſelf that the perſecutions of Fortune were at an end, and that he was upon the point of happier days. But ſo frequent had been the mockery which he had experienced from the blind goddeſs, that he was yet unwilling to truſt her, and was thus in a ſtate of mind which might be called a balance between hope and fear.

Method, however, had none of theſe apprehenſions; he hurried him towards his houſe, promiſing that he ſhould ſee Cecilia, and deſiring him ſpontaneouſly to ſay nothing of the ſacrifice to which he had conſented. This propoſal communicated new vigour to the mind and ſteps of Peregrine; the hope of

of ſeeing Cecilia, led him to forget even his preſent proſpects.

As he was paſſing along the ſtreet, he was ſtopped by a ſervant of Sir Rupert. As Peregrine knew him to be the immediate attendant of Lady Rupee, and one who had accompanied her to Ireland, he demanded of him with ſome aſtoniſhment, whether Sir Rupert had returned?—The ſervant replied in the negative; but added that his Lady had returned, and expreſſed ſome ſurpriſe that ſhe had not ſeen him.

"She arrived in town laſt night," ſaid the man, "and commanded the houſekeeper to ſend you to her immediately. She appeared in ſome alarm that they had not ſeen you ſo long."

Peregrine, by the advice of Method, followed the ſervant, and haſtened to pay his

reſpects to the lady. In a few minutes he arrived at the houſe, and was immediately uſhered into the preſence of the lady, who received him with much friendſhip. After the firſt ſalutes, ſhe ſurpriſed him by a demand if he knew who was his father.

"You muſt not think," ſaid ſhe, "that I enquire without reaſon. I requeſt, therefore, that you will relate your hiſtory without reſerve or concealment."

Peregrine, though in ſome aſtoniſhment, made no other reply than an immediate obedience, and concealed nothing, though his pride was ſomewhat hurt by the neceſſary avowal of his impriſonment. The lady liſtened to him with the greateſt attention, and even made him repeat ſeveral parts of his narrative more than once.

"Well," ſaid ſhe, upon his concluſion, "I have long ſuſpected that your hiſtory had

ſomething of myſtery, and I find that I am not miſtaken. I muſt now tell you the motive of my requeſt. You muſt know, my friend, that I am writing a ſentimental Novel, and that I am in want of an epiſode to conclude a volume. It is neceſſary, you know, that an epiſode ſhould have intereſt; and nothing is ſo likely to intereſt as the relation of real events, and the portraiture of living characters. I propoſe, therefore, to introduce your narrative; and, if I have any room, I ſhall draw your character at full length."

Peregrine had expected a far different and more important motive; ſomething, perhaps, with regard to the development of the ſecret of his birth: the reader therefore may conceive his ſurpriſe when the lady aſſigned the above. Recovering from his aſtoniſhment and diſappointment, he could ſcarcely reſtrain

his

his propenſity to laughter. The lady however did not obſerve this inclination, and, with all the gravity of learned folly, continued to conſult him upon the intended cataſtrophe of her ſentimental Novel.

Peregrine, wearied with this folly, and impatient for his promiſed interview with Cecilia, could ſcarcely conceal his deſire of diſmiſſal, when the lady, after having run her courſe of abſurdity, took a ſmall packet from her pocket, and put it into the hands of Peregrine. Upon opening it, he found it to be a letter from Sir Rupert, and that one part of the contents was a note for a hundred pounds.

The ſubſtance of the letter was as follows: that the efforts of Sir Rupert, in ſearch of his ſiſter, had ſucceeded beyond his expectation; that he had traced out the Captain of the ſhip who had carried her to England,

and that, through this channel, he had arrived at the knowledge of many of her ſubſequent adventures. This part of the letter thus proceeded :—

" The Captain, who had more ſagacity than uſually falls to the ſhare of his ſpecies, conjectured, from the general manner of my ſiſter, that ſhe was not only in ſome diſtreſs, but that her condition was in every reſpect beyond her appearance. He endeavoured to obtain her confidence ; and, as misfortune is not the ſeaſon of reſerve, he ſucceeded. Being a man of humanity, he intereſted himſelf in her welfare, and upon his arrival in England, introduced her into the houſe and protection of a female relation, a milliner in Bond Street. Having thus fixed,

fixed her, as he believed to her satisfaction, he returned to Ireland upon the business of his profession.

" The milliner, to whom he had thus introduced my sister, was of all persons in the world, the most unfit for such a trust: she was profligate, and an almost professed procuress to the higher kind of the Nobility.—A French apprenticeship had formed her, according to the true Parisian model; she was vain, fond of flattery, and full of that vivacity which not unfrequently gilds over the most abandoned licentiousness. My sister, according to the report of the Captain, was unusually beautiful, and unusually ignorant of what is called the world.

" What a prize was this for an intriguing profligate!—Not to weary you by a long detail, a young Nobleman became attached to my sister; but his views, from seeing her

under such protection, were of the most dishonourable nature. The virtue of my sister, however, resisted his utmost efforts; and, as a last resource, he was compelled to have recourse to the co-operation of the milliner.

"My sister now discovered what she had never before suspected, and what perhaps it was fortunate for her that she did discover. The milliner, who had assumed the character of her friend, and who treated her with all the equality of friendship, now assumed a different tone; and though the readiness and ingenuity of my sister in assisting her in the labours of her business, had counterbalanced whatever she had received, she now began to address her in the tone of a superior and creditor. That you may understand the art which was employed to compass the seduction of my unprotected sister, the following was the contrivance:—the milliner,

liner, by her harſhneſs and menace, worked upon the terrors of my ſiſter; the lover was then introduced, and endeavoured to ſooth her, and to take her part againſt the irritated milliner. By theſe means he expected, indeed naturally enough, to obtain an intereſt in her heart. The virtue of my ſiſter, however, foiled all theſe attempts, and the confederates were at length reduced to employ others, the final event of which was, that, as my ſiſter ſaw ſhe was no longer ſafe under ſuch protection, ſhe privately left the houſe.

"It was at this period that the honeſt Captain, her firſt protector, again returned to England; and, as he had not forgotten my ſiſter, he paid a viſit to his relation, the milliner, in the expectation of ſeeing her.—You may conceive his ſurpriſe, when the wretch told him that my ſiſter had been abandoned enough to elope with a paramour,

and that ſhe had never ſeen or heard of her ſince. To this ſhe added a torrent of reproaches upon the Captain himſelf, that he had recommended to her ſo profligate a woman, and thus diſgraced a houſe which had borne away the palm of reputation in the neighbourhood. It was in vain that the Captain proteſted his innocence; her reproaches increaſed, and he was compelled at length to ſeek an eſcape in flight. Such was her hypocriſy.

"It is impoſſible to deſcribe the regret of the Captain upon this diſappointment. This man indeed is poſſeſſed of a moſt unuſual philanthropy; and, with narrow means, has effected more good than others of the moſt ample fortunes. He was the more diſappointed with this reverſe of his expectations, as he had been fully perſuaded of the truth of my ſiſter's narrative.

"As

" As he was paſſing through Bond Street, indulging theſe reflections, ſome one put a paper into his hands, and immediately diſappeared. Upon examining the billet, he found it to be written with a pencil, and its contents to be as follow:—

' SIR,

' If you have any intereſt in the fate of Miſs Rupee, and will meet the writer of this in the third row of the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, this evening, you ſhall be informed as to the true cauſe of her diſappearance. I can only ſay, at preſent, that you are groſsly deceived, and the young woman as infamouſly ſlandered. I can add nothing more at preſent.'

" The Captain, as you may well ſuppoſe, was ſomewhat aſtoniſhed at this intelligence; he reſolved, however, to follow his clue. At the appointed time, therefore, he departed to the place of aſſignation; and though his anonymous correſpondent had fixed upon no mark by which he might recogniſe her, he was not long before he diſcovered her.—They immediately entered upon the ſubject of their interview. The girl here informed him of all the circumſtances I have mentioned: the addreſſes of the lover—the perſecution of the milliner—and the reſiſtance, and final elopement of my ſiſter. The indignation of the honeſt Captain may eaſily be conceived; but all further efforts to trace her proved ineffectual. This is all I have to relate at preſent. But I ſhall not ſtop here: the Captain has promiſed to return with me to England, and you

you may expect us in London in a few days. By purſuing our purpoſe in union, we may, perhaps, have better ſucceſs. The Captain has this moment ſuggeſted to me that, as my ſiſter, and the young girl, who gave him the information related, were in ſome degree of friendſhip with each other, my ſiſter may have ſubſequently given her ſome account of her place of concealment and future ſituation; and that, by tracing out *one*, we might arrive at the knowledge of the *other*. It is our intention to purſue this clue."

The letter here concluded, and Peregrine was filled with aſtoniſhment, and with ſomething which he could not well underſtand, at the contents. His ſurpriſe, however, was ſoon interrupted by other events of more immediate importance.

CHAP. XIII.

PEREGRINE had returned to ſpend the remaining part of the day with his miſtreſs. In the courſe of converſation, with a confidence uſual in their ſituation, Peregrine related to her the ſubject of Sir Rupert's letter. The young lady appeared in the greateſt aſtoniſhment; and before Peregrine was able to enquire the cauſe of an emotion, for which even the unuſual circumſtances, upon the mere grounds of ſympathy, were not ſufficient, ſhe hurried from the room. He was about

about to follow her, when a ſervant entering, preſented him with a packet; adding that it came expreſs, and that a meſſenger waited. Peregrine found it to be a letter from L——, the contents of which were as follow:—

" DEAR PEREGRINE,

" We have executed our commiſſion; and, as you ſhall confeſs yourſelf, have executed it ably. We reached your uncle's houſe about twelve o'clock: a ſervant, in a ſplendid livery, appeared at the door; but upon our enquiry for his maſter, added that he was hunting, but was expected home at four to dinner.

' D——n the fellow!' ſaid one of the officers who attended me, ' what does he mean by inviting us down at twelve, and keeping

keeping us waiting till four? But d——n it, Jack always ſerves us ſo!'

" And here, with an impudence and dexterity not unuſual with theſe gentlemen of the police, he began to relate ſeveral ridiculous and well-contrived anecdotes, by which any one might have been led to believe that Latitat and himſelf muſt have been friends from childhood, though, in fact, they were now about to ſee each other for the firſt time.

" The ſervant ſwallowed the bait, and made ſome polite apologies for his maſter's abſence, requeſting the gentlemen to pardon it, as it was compulſatory.

' No, no, I can't excuſe him,' replied the other; ' this is not the firſt, ſecond, or third time he has ſerved me in this manner. Pox take the fellow, could not he have put off his hunting till to-morrow?—But hark-ye, friend,

friend, what wine have you in the houſe?—Here, bring your boot-jack and a pair of ſlippers!'

"I was abſolutely aſtoniſhed at his eaſy impudence; but he acted his part with ſo much propriety of character, and it took ſo effectually with the ſervant, that he received a moſt magnificent entertainment at the expence of a man he was about to bring to the gallows.

"Wines and a cold collation were immediately ſet before us; and as there were not ſlippers enough in the houſe for the whole party, the officious John was diſpatched in the neighbourhood for more. This ſame eaſy gentleman, the police officer, now undertook to ſhew us the conveniences of his friend's houſe, and, under this pretence, executed the *ſearch-warrant*. Even in the preſence of a houſekeeper, under the excuſe

of wanting a change of linen from his heat in riding, he had the confidence to pick the lock of a wardrobe. In a word, our ſearch was at length effectual, and beyond our expectations: in the private drawer of a cabinet, which, however well concealed, could not eſcape the ſagacity of this gentleman of the police, we at length diſcovered your *uncle's will.*

" Every thing was hitherto conducted with the greateſt dexterity; the ſervants had actually not taken any alarm, and the good lady, the houſekeeper, was taken up with airing ſheets, as the old friend of her maſter had reſolved upon lying there.

" Latitat at length arrived at the gate: without any ſuſpicion he entered the parlour in which we were waiting. You may conceive his terror when the officer preſented his warrant of felony. He denied, with an air

air of candour, that any ſuch will exiſted; and when the name of Ferret was mentioned, added, I believe with ſome juſtice, that the teſtimony of a fellow like that would not be ſufficient to hang a *dog*, even if he charged it on his oath with *madneſs*.

" The officer, however, now produced the will: Latitat was confounded, and ſaid nothing further, ſubmitting to neceſſity with a good grace. To do him juſtice, he carries the appearance of one of the moſt complete villains I have ever ſeen. He has not commenced his trade without a ſuitable capital both of talents and fortitude. A philoſopher tells us that we ſhould be prepared for every thing; and that we ſhould conſider death, baniſhment, and diſgrace, only as the neceſſities of nature. Latitat, as a villain, ſeems equally philoſophic in his ſyſtem; he has taught himſelf to conſider the riſk of a gibbet

as

as one of the neceſſities of his profeſſion; and Socrates himſelf could not ſupport an impriſonment with more fortitude.

'Well, gentlemen,' ſaid he, as ſoon as the warrant was executed on him, 'if it muſt be, be it. But you will remember, according to our law, that every one is innocent till convicted; and therefore, whatever may be the true ſtate of the caſe, the houſe is mine till another proves a better right. I can only add then, that, though I could have wiſhed you had never come *here*, ſtill as you *are* here, you ſhall dine well.'

" To do him juſtice, he for once kept his word; and I do ſincerely believe, if I had not been preſent, the officers would have compounded the affair for his wines, and other liberal treatment. His old friend in particular, as he called himſelf, appeared highly delighted with his new acquaintance; he delayed

delayed as long as poſſible to take him away; but I at length compelled him to a full execution of his duty.

" His priſoner is by this time ſuitably lodged; for my part, I have undertaken the poſſeſſion and cuſtody of the houſe, in which you muſt permit me to conſider myſelf as your ſteward till your own arrival.

" As the will is poſitive in its bequeſts in your favour—as the witneſſes are living, and though, by the ingenuity of Latitat, removed at preſent to ſome diſtance, may be yet brought forward by that of Ferret—or, what I believe will rather happen, as the evidence of Ferret may of itſelf be conſidered ſufficient, you have nothing to do but to follow the bearer of this expreſs, and in perſon ſuperſede my commiſſion.

" The ſervants, like worthy fellows, ſeeing one maſter about to be hanged, are ready to engage

engage with another; they have all requeſted my intereſt in procuring them places, and the houſekeeper, to enforce her application, has betrayed ſo much of her late maſter, and ſpoken ſo much in your praiſe, that I have already given her *warning*, and am only ſorry that I cannot ſend her to accompany Latitat.

"Your's ſincerely,

"L——."

It is unneceſſary to diſplay the different emotions of Peregrine's mind cauſed by the receipt of this letter. What a ſudden reverſe in his fortune!—From penury, from debt, from impriſonment, from hopeleſs love, he was at once releaſed by this tide of ſucceſs in his favour. The means were ſcarcely leſs extra-

extraordinary than the event; it was, in fine, one of thoſe incidents which give to real life the colours of romance:—though the thing was before him, it was almoſt incredible; he examined it repeatedly before he was able to believe it.

He was interrupted in theſe reflections by the re-entrance of his miſtreſs, which recalled to his memory the manner and the occaſion on which ſhe had left the room.—She gave him no time to demand an explanation, but immediately entered upon the ſubject.

"I believe it is in my power," ſaid ſhe, "to aſſiſt, perhaps to terminate the enquiries of your friend Sir Rupert. As you were relating the ſubject of his letter, it occurred to me that I had heard a ſimilar relation from my own milliner. I am perſuaded that this is the ſame girl who formerly gave informa-

tion

tion to the worthy Captain. I have ſent for her, and you may expect her immediately."

It is needleſs to ſay how much this circumſtance added to the ſatisfaction of Peregrine, who now found himſelf enabled to return, in ſome meaſure, the kindneſs of Sir Rupert. He now explained, in his turn, the ſubject of the packet which he had juſt received; and as the father of Cecilia happened in the ſame moment to enter the room, put the letter into his hand.

Peregrine and his miſtreſs retired to the window whilſt he was employed in the peruſal; and as he read it with his uſual preciſeneſs, they had ſome moments of converſation. The beauty of Cecilia was much increaſed by the ſatisfaction which the opening proſpect of her love had inſpired.

"The beſt circumſtance in this reverſe of fortune," ſaid Peregrine, in return to her congra-

congratulations, " is the opportunity it gives me of addreſſing you on a footing of equality, and, on that head, of being at leaſt quit of all obligations to you.—Your father, I ſhould think, would not refuſe his intereſt, when backed by ſuch powerful motives; and you may now judge of the ſincerity of my paſſion, by my making an inſtant demand of his conſent."

Cecilia, whoſe face was all the time crimſoned over with bluſhes, checked the precipitancy of his offer; but in a manner which ſerved to ſhew her ſatisfaction at its being made. They had not time for further converſation, but were interrupted by old Method, who had now finiſhed the peruſal of the letter.

" Well," ſaid he, " every thing goes on as one could wiſh, and no time muſt be loſt."

Saying

Saying this, he commanded a ſervant to order the coach.

A letter was now brought to Cecilia, who, opening it, ſaid it was from the daughter of the milliner to whom ſhe had ſent; and putting it into Peregrine's hands, he read as follows:—

" MADAM,

" I am ſorry that my mother is not at preſent at home, having gone into the country on buſineſs of ſome conſequence. Two gentlemen from abroad called at our houſe about two hours before the delivery of your letter; and, after an interview of ſome time with my mother, they all departed together.

" I am, Madam,

" Your obedient ſervant."

The

The coach being now at the door, Peregrine took leave of his miſtreſs, and in company with Method took his ſeat. The latter demanded of the former whether his patron, Sir Rupert, was not expected in town? Peregrine, in anſwer to this queſtion, put his letter into the hands of Method; and while he was engaged in the peruſal of it, and the carriage was proceeding to the deſtined place, Peregrine was involved in his own thoughts, which were rather employed upon his miſtreſs than his own good fortune.

How powerful, and nearly allied to romance, are the feelings of genuine paſſion!—From the reverſes of his former life Peregrine was about to be raiſed to affluence; yet ſo far was he from conſidering this as the moſt brilliant part of his fortune, that, had the poſſeſſion of this wealth involved him in the

loſs of Cecilia, he would not have heſitated, more than the moſt decided hero of romance, to have purchaſed his miſtreſs by the ſurrender of every other good.

Peregrine was rouſed from theſe reflections by the exclamation of Method, who profeſſed himſelf not a little perplexed by the contents of Sir Rupert's letter.

"Who can this ſiſter of Sir Rupert be?" ſaid he; "or can he expect, after ſuch a lapſe of time, to find her?—But, by this letter, Sir Rupert ſhould have been in town before this: it is dated three weeks ago, and he ſays in his poſtſcript that you may expect him in town within a few days."

This obſervation had eſcaped Peregrine; but, on examining the date of the letter, he found it to be juſt. There was now, however, no time for further reflection, as the coach had reached the gate of Latitat's houſe.

L—— appeared to receive him almoſt in the ſame moment; and as the affair had now become public, he found the houſe ſurrounded by a throng of the neighbours. They received him, as the lawful and injured heir, with that kind of enthuſiaſm of ſatisfaction which is always inſpired in the multitude by the redreſs of injuſtice. Peregrine's emotions were of a mixed nature; he could not be diſcontented at returning in this manner to the houſe in which he had paſſed his early infancy, nor could he in the ſame moment be wholly inſenſible to that infamy and diſgrace which the villany, and more particularly the puniſhment, of Latitat muſt reflect upon himſelf. Bowing to the honeſt crowd, he hurried into the houſe.

CHAP. XIV.

L—— congratulated him, upon his entrance, on this ſudden and complete reverſe of fortune.

"For ſo complete is it," ſaid L——, "that you will not even be put to the expence, or, what you might think worſe, the delay of a law-ſuit. I have related every thing to a neighbour of your's, a counſel of great eminence, and he has given it as his fixed opinion, and to enable you to act upon it, has confirmed it by his ſignature, that you have nothing at preſent to do but to take immediate

immediate poſſeſſion of your eſtate; that the evidence of Ferret, as an accomplice, is ſufficient to convict Latitat; and that the puniſhment of the latter includes every requiſite for the full eſtabliſhment of your right. Permit me therefore to congratulate you as maſter of this houſe, and three thouſand acres of the beſt land this county can produce.—As to the condition of the houſe, you ſee what it is. The Spaniſh proverb ſays—'Happy is the heir who ſucceeds to the cellar of a broken-necked hunter, and the eſtates of a hanged lawyer;'—you have the good fortune to enjoy both felicities in one; for Latitat was both lawyer and hunting 'Squire."

Saying this, he conducted Peregrine with Method to an adjacent parlour, and requeſting them to await his return, promiſed Peregrine to bring with him ſome viſitors,

whom he ſuppoſed he could not be diſpleaſed to ſee.

Peregrine was in ſome curioſity till his return. His ſurpriſe was almoſt equal to his ſatisfaction when he beheld L—— re-entering the room with Sir Rupert and another. It is needleſs to relate their mutual pleaſure upon this unexpected interview. Peregrine, after his firſt ſatisfaction had ſubſided, demanded of his patron whether he had found his ſiſter?

"Yes," replied Sir Rupert; "and, what is at preſent more to my purpoſe, my *nephew* too!"

Peregrine could only expreſs his ſurpriſe by a ſtare of aſtoniſhment.

"Come, come, my good boy," cried Sir Rupert, "I have at preſent no time for explanation; it will be ſufficient for me to ſay that you are my nephew, and you muſt think

it

it proof enough that I am perſuaded of it.—I have told you in my laſt letter what clue I meant to follow: by good fortune I found the milliner's girl, now ſet up for herſelf, whom I mentioned; ſhe directed, and, upon my requeſt, conſented to accompany me hither; our ſearch has fully ſucceeded:—in a word, your mother, the lady whom the charity of your father, the Doctor, admitted to his houſe, when, in her eſcape from the perſecution of her falſe friend, ſhe happened to come to this village, was *my* ſiſter.—To be perſuaded of it, you have only to peruſe theſe papers at your leiſure; they are in the hand-writing of your mother, and contain the ſame circumſtances, ſomewhat more detailed, which I have briefly related in my letter."

Peregrine was ſilent with aſtoniſhment; his good fortune now appeared to have no

end, and one prosperous event was only succeeded by another. Method interrupted him, by demanding what was to be done with Latitat.—Peregrine expressed a great unwillingness that he should suffer the penalties of the law; and added that, however injured, he could never persuade himself to appear against him.

"The temptation," said he, "was great, and being an elder nephew than myself, and thus heir at law, he might probably consider some right upon his side; at any rate, a bait like this might tempt a stronger virtue.—I cannot but wish that a prosecution may be needless."

"And I," said L——, "cannot consent that he should altogether escape. I would only extend mercy to those, by whom I think mercy would be extended to others; I would not pardon these common enemies of mankind.

kind. It is this injudicious lenity which encourages every kind of crime;—if, by withholding our teſtimony, we could be the means of again letting looſe this couſin of your's upon ſociety, he would doubtleſs only employ himſelf in ſeeking new prey, and would be but the more dexterous, as his wit would be ſharpened by neceſſity."

"D——n the fellow!" ſaid Method; "let us ſend him for ſeven years' tranſportation, and get him hanged for ſpiriting up a mutiny among the convicts."

"We are talking," ſaid Sir Rupert, "as if the laws of the country were at our own diſpoſal. Latitat is now in the hands of Juſtice, and, my word for it, will not eſcape without his merits. And, faith! I think it a pity he ſhould.—Nothing is more dangerous to ſociety than a raſcal who has eſcaped the puniſhment of his crimes; and when the

fellow is both a rascal and a *lawyer*, we have every reason to expect double mischief.—Let us leave him to the laws."

They were now interrupted by a messenger with a letter to Peregrine. Having opened it, he gave an exclamation of astonishment, and, in answer to the enquiries of his friends, put it into the hands of L——, who read it aloud. The contents were as follow:—

" SIR,

" I hasten to inform you that Latitat has escaped from the hands of the officers; having taken an opportunity, whilst at an inn upon the road, to get out of the window of a lower room, and mounting the horse of a Dragoon, which happened to be tied at the door, he fled with a rapidity which

I have

I have reaſon to believe will mock every hope of apprehenſion. I know not whether more to congratulate or condole with you upon this event; for, as Latitat was ſo near a relation, you could not be inſenſible to the diſgrace of his puniſhment. I need not add, moreover, that no one was more ingenious in his ſhifts; and had he remained to take his trial, he would, by ſome ſubtilty or another, have eſcaped, and thus have put you to greater difficulty to prove your right, than you will have at preſent. I have only to ſay, that nothing ſhall be wanting on my part, though the confeſſion muſt neceſſarily include the avowal of my own guilt. With regard to the eſcape of my old friend, it is impoſſible that it could have happened without the cognizance of the officers. No one was better gifted with the powers of perſuaſion than Latitat; for, to do him juſtice, no

one was more liberal when it ſuited his purpoſes.

" I am your's, &c.

Newgate. " NAT. FERRET.

" *P. S.* As I can be of no further uſe to your cauſe, you will be ſo kind as to petition for my releaſe from priſon."

Peregrine was equally ſurpriſed and pleaſed with this eſcape, which at once relieved him from his embarraſſment with regard to his diſpoſal of Latitat.

It is needleſs to add that Ferret was not unjuſt in his ſuſpicions reſpecting the fidelity of the officers. Latitat's purſe, fortunately for himſelf, happened at that time to be well ſupplied; and, as he conſidered that he could not lay out his money better than in buying his

his eſcape, he did not heſitate as to terms, but, without a word, ſlipped his purſe into the hands of the officer, who ſoon found an opportunity to wink at his eſcape, without fixing upon himſelf any thing of the diſgrace of a connivance. Latitat availed himſelf of it nearly in the manner Ferret has related, and made the beſt of his way out of the kingdom.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

FORTUNE, who had ſo long perſecuted Peregrine, ſeemed now reſolved to make all poſſible amends; and every thing ſucceeded ſo fully to his wiſhes, that his friends had ſcarcely congratulated him on one event, before they were called upon for freſh compliments on a following one. Nothing, as we have obſerved before, could give him more pleaſure than the eſcape of Latitat; but his friends were not without apprehenſion that, under the circumſtances of this eſcape, he would have ſome difficulty to eſtabliſh his claim,

claim. This obſtacle was removed by the voluntary appearance of one of the witneſſes of the will; nothing farther was wanted.—Thus, within leſs than a week after his arrival at the houſe of his late uncle, he found himſelf fully inveſted in the poſſeſſion of his property.

Without his miſtreſs, however, he would have conſidered even *this* as little. His friend, Sir Rupert, and the father of Cecilia ſtill remained with him; but the latter now took his leave, with the promiſe of a ſpeedy return, and that his daughter ſhould accompany him. L—— and Sir Rupert ſtill continued.

In the interval between the departure of Method and his return, Peregrine was at ſome loſs to fill up his time; and now experienced, what he could otherwiſe not have believed, the *tædium* of vacancy.

In

In one of the converſations between L—— and himſelf, the latter dwelt upon the long abſence of Haſtings, and added that, as the uſual period of the voyage was now elapſed, he would doubtleſs ſoon arrive. He had ſcarcely finiſhed before the bell at the gate announced a viſitor. Peregrine and his friend were walking in a lawn before the houſe; the gentleman therefore had ſcarcely left his carriage, before they recogniſed in him the ſubject of their converſation—Haſtings himſelf!

It is unneceſſary to relate their firſt ſalutation, and the mutual ſatisfaction of each at this interview. Peregrine expreſſed his ſurpriſe at his arrival; adding an enquiry by what means he had traced his reſidence.

"I have not only learned," ſaid Haſtings, "that you live here, but am as well acquainted as yourſelf with every part of your fortune,

fortune. You muſt not imagine that it is only ill news flies quick; fame, whether good or bad, has wings of equal ſtrength; and has, perhaps, been more vigorous here, ſince at the ſame time that ſhe publiſhed the ſucceſs of *one* man, ſhe promulgated the ruin of *another*. I have learned every thing at Sir Rupert's, where I ſought you upon my firſt arrival."

Saying this, he added thoſe congratulations which might be expected. Peregrine demanded of him what he had done or ſeen ſince their laſt ſeparation.

"As to what I have done," ſaid Haſtings, "I too may boaſt an unexpected ſucceſs. By dint either of ingenuity or good fortune, I have more than trebled my capital; and as to literature, I can now take a final leave of it. As to what I have ſeen, it is better worth telling; and I propoſe, from gratitude

to

to the public for my former works, to take my leave of them by publiſhing my travels. What by telling them what I have ſeen, and, according to the cuſtom of other travellers, what I have *not* ſeen, I ſhall make out a couple of decent quartos; and perhaps pay my paſſage by their profits. But of the life of an author I have taken an eternal farewell."

A ſecond carriage at the gate now caught their attention. Peregrine recogniſed his miſtreſs, and flew to receive her with the eagerneſs of a lover.

We ſhall not here commence a practice which our readers may perceive we have omitted through the whole of our work, a deſcription of what may be better conceived —ſcenes of courtſhip; or what, in the language of romance, are termed, with ſofter elegance—"the expreſſion of the ſentiments of the heart."—We have obſerved, in the courſe

courſe of our own experience, that, whatever may be the effect with relation to the actors themſelves, they have little to catch the attention or excite the intereſt of the reader. It is ſufficient therefore to add, that Peregrine ſpoke and acted, and his miſtreſs bluſhed and replied, like all other lovers in the ſame ſituation.

As every thing in the hiſtory of Peregrine was now as well known in the county as on the ſpot where it had happened, it was generally expected that, on his taking poſſeſſion of his eſtate, he ſhould give an entertainment to the neighbourhood.

It is well obſerved, that the characters of nations are nowhere ſo legible as in their jubilees. Is an Italian happy? he fiddles. Is a Frenchman happy? he dances. Is a German? he drinks. Is it a Dutchman? he ſmokes. But is an Engliſhman ſurpriſed with

with any turn of good fortune, he regales himſelf and his neighbours with a *dinner!*

Peregrine very willingly yielded to this neceſſity; and Method, to his no little ſatisfaction, arrived in time to partake of the arrangement both of the diſhes and the gueſts. As a ball and ſupper were to be added for the ladies, Cecilia conſented to do the honours of the houſe; and, as the hour of dinner was now approaching, retired to dreſs for the purpoſe.

Method, who ſince the ſudden reverſe in the ſituation of Peregrine, was equally eager to give him the hand of Cecilia, as Peregrine himſelf to receive it, now took Sir Rupert aſide, and without further ceremony propoſed an union.

Peregrine, Haſtings, and L—— being thus left to converſation, the two firſt demanded of L——, with ſome friendſhip, whether

whether his preſent ſituation was ſuch as ſuited his wiſhes.

"Yes," replied L——, "let others affect to deſpiſe what they call an author; for my part. I am as contented in a ſtate of literature as I could be in any other. However, it is not without its diſadvantages. If ſome are pleaſed to ſay it is more laborious than a porter, they muſt doubtleſs acknowledge that few profeſſions are more ancient and honourable. It is true, indeed, that its profits are not great; but it may be ſaid again, that what is got (with regard to labour at leaſt) is well earned; and to add, what I muſt ever think concluſive in its favour, who can ſpeak againſt a trade which even thoſe, who do not require it as a profeſſion, exerciſe as a pleaſure? In one word, my friends, I am contented."

Method,

Method, having now explained himſelf to Sir Rupert, rejoined them.

" I have often told you," ſaid he, addreſſing Peregrine, " that whatever objection I might have to your marriage with my daughter, the obſtacle was rather your former diſproportionate fortune than yourſelf. In the courſe of a long life, I have learned not only the value of riches, but the difficulty of obtaining them; I ſhould conſider myſelf as having ill diſcharged the duty of a father if, with this experience, I had conſented to give Cecilia, with all my wealth, to one who, at that time, was not worth a ſhilling: but circumſtances are now changed. I have only to add that Cecilia is your's!"

It is unneceſſary to ſay that Peregrine received this gift with a gratitude proportioned to its value. He had learned too much, by his long experience of life and character, to

take offence at this addreſs of Method's; he had been taught to adopt as a maxim of life, that rule of Rochefoucault—" that in the favours we receive from others, we muſt not examine too nicely into the motive; that ſuch favours are, in other words, but exchanges, and the intereſt of the giver will not unfrequently be found to preponderate in the ſcale."

Peregrine therefore accepted his miſtreſs with as much ardour as either herſelf or father could wiſh; and Sir Rupert who, with all his benevolence, was not without what is uſually called knowledge of the world, was ſcarcely leſs pleaſed with the union, which introduced ſo much new wealth, and therefore new conſequence, into his family. In a word, every one appeared contented. Indeed one can ſcarcely imagine that any thing

thing was wanting to the full measure of their happiness.

Our history may now be concluded in a few words. In a few days, the union of Peregrine and Cecilia took place. With regard to our other characters, it will be sufficient to add that the greater part enjoyed that happiness which the condition of human life allowed them to expect.

Sir Rupert had the good fortune to obtain a seat in Parliament; and by some services, either to the country or administration, was advanced to a Peerage.

The father of Cecilia was seized with a caprice of a different kind:—having realized an immense fortune, he thought that nothing more was to be done, but to enjoy the remainder of his days in repose, and for this purpose took a house in the neighbourhood

hood of Peregrine. He had fallen, however, into a common error, and was not long in diſcovering—that idleneſs was one thing, and repoſe another; and that if he ſought to enjoy the *one*, he muſt avoid the *other*. In a word, ſuch was the contraſt between his preſent and former life—between his former activity and his preſent abſolute inertneſs, that, incapable any longer of ſupporting a life of ſuch ſtillneſs and inutility, he reſolved to return to his former profeſſion. He again, therefore, entered his counting-houſe; a lively inſtance of the effect of habit, and which, if well conſidered, may lead us into ſome ſalutary reflections.

How many retired citizens and men of buſineſs, within the neighbourhood of our metropolis, afford us examples of men who are at this moment, perhaps, in a ſimilar ſituation—who have ſighed and toiled in the

firſt years of their life for the attainment of a ſum upon which they predetermine to retire, and, according to the uſual phraſe, enjoy the evening of their life in repoſe! The neceſſary fortune is at length made, their ſtock ſold, and the buſineſs preſented or diſpoſed of to a partner. An eſtate is purchaſed; they fly to it, and the happineſs of retirement *begins*. A week, however, ſcarcely paſſes over their head, before the happineſs of retirement *ends*. In the tedium of idleneſs, how willingly would they hail an invitation to return to the ſpirited buſtle, and even fatigue of trade! This is, perhaps, no longer in their power; their ſpirits flag—they are in an element to which they are not aſſimilated—their cheerfulneſs is no more—and their life at length terminates in repentance and diſcontent.

With

With regard to the happineſs of Peregrine and Cecilia, we may deſcribe it in the words of Horace :—

" Felices ter, et ampliùs
" Quos irrupta tenet copula ; nec malis
" Divulſus quærimoniis,
" Supremâ citiùs ſolvet amor die."

FINIS.

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